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BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR MINISTERING IN THE CHURCH:
A STUDY OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS, THE GIFTS OF GRACE, AND THE
MINISTRY, WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THEIR MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by
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INTRODUCTION

The Bible uses several different terms when it talks about the church. Jesus mostly spoke about the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven. As Jesus was coming, John the Baptist cried out: "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, repent." Jesus used a number of parables to explain to His disciples and to the people what that term meant. Only twice did He use the word ἐκκλησία, most frequently used in Acts and the epistles. Several of the expressions used in the New Testament for expressing what the church is, emphasize that the church is not an outward structure, but a living organism. This is vividly expressed when Jesus talked about the vine. "I am the vine, you are the branches," He said (John 15:5). The church has a spiritually organic relationship to Christ, and through Him the members have a spiritually organic relationship to one another. Peter talks about the church as a "spiritual house" built with "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5). And Paul says that each of these living stones is a temple for the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). But perhaps the term which most strongly expresses that the church is an organism is the term "body." The church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:12; Rom. 12:4-5). And Christ is the head of the body, the church (Col. 1:18; 2:19; Eph. 5:23).

Such terms, especially the last one, contain important information about the nature of the church and how it functions. The vital aspect of the church is not buildings and an effective

organization, but the fact that the true church exists and functions only in a spiritually organic relationship to its head, Christ, and through Him in fellowship with one another. Concerning this Claude Welch very aptly says:

The reality which the image [about the body] designates is first and fundamentally the participation of the believer and the community in the life of Christ. But that idea leads inevitably to the relation of the believers to one another in Christ. Participation is never in isolation but always in community. One is never alone in Christ. Membership in Him is at the same time membership in one another.¹

The true church which is the body of Christ does not function according to human strategy or organizational talents. Concerning the church's relationship to its head Welch makes the following important statement:

First, that Christ is the head means that the church is absolutely dependent upon Him and subject to Him. The church exists only in dependence on Christ as the source and object of that memory, faith and hope which shapes the reality of the community and makes it to be. . . . There can be no thought of autonomy in the existence of the church, but only of an existence in relation to, by participation in, Christ the head. Therefore the church attributes everything to Him, is content to belong to Him, to live below Him and to follow after Him. . . .

That the church is subject to Christ as the head means also that the church is governed by Him through the Spirit, that the decisions, acts and words in the church are subordinate to His decision, act and word, that He is ever free to dispose as He will of the ways and forms of the church, that infallibility and impeccability can never be claimed for them, that the church must continually listen for His voice and distinguish it from the voices of other lords.²

¹Claude Welch, The Reality of the Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 165.

²Ibid., pp. 175-76.

We believe that the Bible has laid down principles for the functions and workings of the church and that it is very important for the life and the mission of the church to understand and to apply these principles.

As we look at church history, however, we find that these principles have been understood and practiced in different ways. At times these principles have been obviously violated and neglected to the great harm of the church, and sometimes even to its ruin.

It is not the intention of this paper to discuss the life and function of the church in all its aspects, but to concentrate on three areas, namely the priesthood of all believers, the gifts of grace, and the ministry. Each area will be discussed separately as to their nature, functions, and their relationship. It is intended that the paper will be concluded with a summary of the findings and conclusions.

The Bible passages in focus for this study will not be treated in exegetical detail since that would exceed the limits of this paper. Only the main terms and principles found in the passages will be discussed.

The three areas which will be discussed have been understood and practiced in very different ways in the history of the church. There are great differences among the different denominations, but also within the same denomination the understanding and practice may not be consistent. Needless to say, it is not expected that this paper will solve all the problems connected with them, but it is hoped that it may make a contribution to the understanding and practice of these important principles for the life and the mission of the church.

CHAPTER I

THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

In seeking to understand what the priesthood of all believers is and how it should function in the church today, it is necessary to look at it against the background of the Old Testament.

The Work and Function of the Priest in the Old Testament

When Moses had led the people of Israel out of Egypt, God commanded Moses already in the desert to institute a priesthood with Aaron as the first high priest. God gave Moses a detailed description of how the worship and the temple should be arranged, and what the task of the priesthood was. Its task and function may be divided into four areas.

A mediator between the people and God

The priesthood, with the high priest as the head, was the mediator between the people and God. Once a year, on the day of atonement, the high priest slaughtered an animal and took the blood and proceeded into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled it on the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat, to make atonement for his own sin, and for the sin of the people. He was warned by God not to enter into the holy place without the atoning blood. This was repeated every year (Leviticus 16). By this the people of Israel were instructed that only by the atoning blood of the sacrifice were their sins forgiven by God.

The other members of the priesthood carried out the daily offerings in the holy place as mediators between God and the people (Lev. 21:6). When a man of Israel wanted to bring an offering to the Lord, he was to slaughter the sacrifice at the entrance of the tabernacle (Lev. 17:1-5), but the priest was to sprinkle the blood on the altar of the Lord (Lev. 17:6; Leviticus 1). The priest was the mediator between the man and the Lord.

An intercessor for the people

The priests were also intercessors for the people. As the Lord had commanded Moses, the people made garments for Aaron and his sons, the priests. On the shoulders they put onyx stones with the names of the sons of Israel engraved on them, and on the breastplate they made four rows of stones with three stones in each row. On these stones were engraved the names of the twelve sons of Israel. Aaron and his sons were to wear these garments when ministering in the holy place (Ex. 39:6,8,10,14,41). Wearing these clothes, the priests were representing the whole of Israel as they bore the sacrifices and made the intercessions before the Lord. And the offerings in themselves were prayers and thanksgiving to the Lord. The incense was a symbol of the petitions and the thanksgiving rising up to the Lord. And the priests were ordered that burnt offering was to be on the hearth of the altar day and night and that the fire was never to go out (Lev. 6:8-9). So one of the priests was always to be in the holy place making intercession for the people as a mediator between them and God.

A teacher of the people

But the priests were not only to make intercession for the people. They also had an obligation to instruct the people, as Moses said to the priestly tribe of Levi: "They shall teach Jacob thy ordinances, and Israel thy law" (Deut. 33:8-10). Talking about the duties of the Levitical priests, the prophet Ezekiel said: "They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean" (Ezek. 44:23). And the prophet Malachi reminded the priests of the Lord's command to them (Mal. 2:1) saying: "For the lips of a priest shall guard knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 2:7).

Judging and bestowing blessing

But the priests were not only to instruct; if necessary they were also to judge according to the law of the Lord (Ezek. 44:24).

And finally the priests were authorized to bless the people of Israel (Num. 6:22-27). And to pass on a blessing in Israel was more than to utter a pious wish. It was really to mediate the favour of Jahve to the people. When the Lord's shining face was toward Israel His grace was upon them.

Jesus Christ, the Fulfillment and Completion of the Old Testament Priesthood

The Old Testament priesthood points to the priesthood of Christ. The Old Testament priesthood was but a shadow of what was to come in Him (Heb. 10:1), and yet it helps us to understand the

great vicarious atonement of Jesus. As the high priest carrying the blood of the sacrifice sanctified himself for the people (Ex. 39:30), so the perfect high priest, Jesus Christ said: ". . . for their sake I consecrate myself" (John 17:19). And Paul said that Jesus is the true paschal lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). And he said in 1 Tim. 2:5-6 that ". . . there is one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ who gave himself as the ransom for all . . ." Jesus did not bring the sacrifice of animals, but He, the Son of God and Son of Man, who did not know sin, but was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21), as our substitute, gave Himself as the sacrifice and in that way fulfilled the purpose of all the sacrifices and the priesthood of the Old Covenant (Heb. 9:11-14; 10:1-14). He became the mediator of a new covenant. When His vicarious atonement was finished, the "curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to the bottom" (Matt. 27:51). Through our perfect mediator and in His name man has access directly to the throne of God (Heb. 10:19-22; 4:14-16).

Jesus is also the perfect fulfillment of the Old Testament priesthood as an intercessor ". . . to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). He is our advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1).

Jesus Christ is also the perfect teacher of the way of salvation. In that sense, too, He is the fulfillment of the Old Testament priesthood. They who follow His Word shall never live in darkness. He is himself "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6). He is also the teacher of the Christian life.

Jesus will also, on the last day, fulfill the Old Testament priesthood's function of judging, which will be a final judgement (Matt. 25:31-46). But he who is in Christ will not be condemned (John 3:18).

Jesus Christ also bestows the true priestly blessing upon those who believe in Him, that ". . . He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7).

What Christ as our mediator has done and is doing for us Luther expressed beautifully:

By His [Christ's] Word and preaching He proclaims God's grace and promises us the forgiveness of our sins. Thereby He bestows upon us the true priestly benediction. Furthermore, He has made the true priestly sacrifice for us, which has the power of reconciling God and removing our sin from us. He also represents us before God with His intercession in our behalf, so that we may continue in this reconciliation and grace and be preserved in it.¹

Therefore in Christ the Old Testament sacrifices and priesthood are fulfilled and all who have become new creatures in Christ have become priests before God and man. What does this imply for us?

What the New Testament Says About All Believers as Priests
Fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy

God chose Israel to be His people in a special way (Deut. 7:6). He chose Abraham and made His covenant with him, and blessed him, and promised that ". . . by you all the families of the earth shall bless

¹Martin Luther, Luther's Works, vol. 13: Selected Psalms II, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), p. 321. Hereafter this reference will be cited as LW, 13.

themselves" (Gen. 12:3). God renewed the covenant with Moses and gave Israel his law and said that ". . . if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples . . ." (Ex. 19:5). But Israel did not obey the Lord's commands. They did not respond to God's love toward them. They were as an unfaithful and adulterous wife to her husband, as the prophet Hosea so vividly portrayed. But God did not give up His people. Through the prophet Jeremiah He promised that He would make a new covenant with Israel and said: "I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people . . ." (Jer. 31:31-34). Then they shall all "know the Lord" and then the promise in Ex. 19:6 will be truly fulfilled. These people will ". . . be to me a kingdom of priests (מְלִאֲכָהִים כְּהֹנִיִּים) and a holy nation," as the Lord says, and then ". . . they will be able to declare praise to God" (Is. 43:20-21).

Thus what was prophesied and promised in the Old Covenant was to be fulfilled in the New Covenant through Jesus Christ. Then all who would be members of the New Covenant through faith in Jesus and baptism would be "a royal priesthood." It will here be necessary to take a closer look at what this new priesthood is and what function and mission it has.

An exposition of the Scripture passages which directly deal with the subject

Although there are many places in the New Testament which deal with the new people of God, its nature and its work, we will

here first look at those passages which directly talk about this new priesthood.

1 Peter 2:5,9 -- In Chapter 1, Peter described the people of God as having been born anew to a new life and new hope through "the precious blood of Christ . . ." (verse 19). In 2:5 he said it is like a "spiritual house" built up of "living stones." About this people he said that they are "a holy priesthood" (*ἱεράτευμα ἅγιον*). This " *ἱεράτευμα* " is not the office of the priest, but the priesthood."² This priesthood is called to "offer spiritual sacrifices" (*ἀνέγκαι πνευματικὰς θυσίας*). The word *ἀναφέρειν* referred to means bringing an offering to the altar. And the offering (*θυσία*) which this new priesthood is to bring to God, and which is acceptable to Him, was characterized as spiritual (*πνευματικὰς*). "They have their origin in *πνεῦμα* , and bear on them its nature and essence."³ They are worked by God's Holy Spirit, therefore they are acceptable to God. Joh. Hutter very well depicts the nature of this new priesthood when he says:

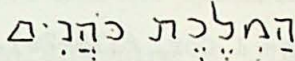
The points of difference are strictly set forth. Israel had a house of God; the Christian Church is call to be itself that house of God. That house was built of inanimate stones, this of living stones; it is a spiritual house. Israel was to be a holy priesthood, but it was so only in the particular priesthood introduced into the church; the Christian Church

²Joh. Ed. Hutter, A Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude, Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, Publishers, 1887), p. 247.

³Ibid.

is called to be a ἱεράτευμα ἅγιον in this sense, that each individual in it is called upon to perform the office of priest.⁴

In verse 9 Peter characterized the new priesthood as "a chosen race" (γένος ἐκλεκτόν) with clear reference to Deut. 7:6; Is. 43:10; Is. 43:20; 44:1-2; 45:4. They are born anew (1:23) to a new race, γένος , and they are not of this world as Jesus said (John 17:16).

The expression βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα , referred to Ex. 19:6  . Some take βασίλειον as a noun, as can possibly be done in the Septuagint, and they translate it "a kingdom of priests." It seems most correct, however, as both Hutter⁵ and Charles Bigg⁶ do, to take it as an adjective. Ἱεράτευμα would then convey the main idea, and βασίλειον would give a more exact definition, and the translation would be "a royal priesthood," which is also the most usual translation. And the meaning would be as Hutter puts it: ". . . a priesthood serving Jehovah the King . . . not only the relation of service, but also of belonging to and participation in the glory of the King founded thereon."⁷ This expression shows the exalted position of the priesthood and the important service it performs. The priests belong to the Lord as His chosen possession and partakers of His glory and are in His service.

⁴Ibid., p. 248.

⁵Ibid., p. 252.

⁶Charles Bigg, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and Jude, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), p. 134.

⁷Hutter, p. 252.

Peter then characterized this priesthood as ἔθνος ἅγιον (see Ex. 19:6; Deut. 7:6; Mal. 3:17; Is. 43:21). The priests are holy because they are cleansed in the blood of Christ and belong to God who is holy. "The nation is ἅγιον because it is separated from other nations and consecrated to the service of God."⁸

Peter used still another expression, λαός περιποίησιν, to emphasize that it is God's possession, and they are His workmanship, as Paul said (Eph. 2:10). They are His because they are bought with the price of Christ's own blood (see 1 Cor. 6:19-20). And belonging to God as His people, they will naturally serve Him.

The last part of the verse tells what service or mission this priesthood is called to perform. First of all they shall declare τὰς ἀρετὰς. International Critical Commentary gives the following explanation of this word:

ἀρετὴ in the Bible never signifies moral virtue, except in Phil. 4:8; 2 Pet. 1:3,5 and the Apocrypha. Here it is used in the proper Greek sense of any shining or eminent quality, such as makes a man noble in himself, and glorious in the eyes of others. The Hebrew word represented in Isaiah by τὰς ἀρετὰς means "my praise" The Christian is to show forth in word and life, not merely the goodness of God, but His glory, His greatness, all His noble attributes, wisdom, justice, strength.⁹

We may add to this that both from the context and from what Peter has written in the first chapter it is clear that they should declare God's great salvation in all its fullness and the marvelous salvation and hope it gives people. The royal priesthood has moved from darkness (σκότους), from the hopeless condition of sin and perdition in

⁸ Bigg, p. 134.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 134-35.

which they were as unregenerate people (see Col. 2:13), to His marvelous light (θαυμαστόν αὐτοῦ φῶς), which signifies the great salvation and hope in Jesus who is the light of the world. They have been effectively called into this salvation (καλεῖν denotes here as in Paul's letters an effective calling). It is the salvation in Christ of which they have become partakers, which they are called to declare. The purpose of the service of this new priesthood is both the edification and the upbuilding of the saints, verse 5 (see Col. 3:16), and the enlightening of those still living in darkness outside of Christ's salvation (see Matt. 5:14-16).

Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6 -- These verses in Revelation do not bring any new concepts to what we have already found in 1 Peter 2:5 and 9, so we intend to make just a few comments on these verses.

The King James Version translates 1:6: ". . . made us kings and priests unto God . . .," which seems to be based on the Septuagint and the Greek translations of Symmachus and Theodotion. But the best confirmed text is definitely βασιλεία reign, rule, kingdom, domain, and the translation should be ". . . made us a kingdom, priests to our God and father." This is also how it is most often translated.

Immediately before verse 6 it is said that Christ ". . . has freed us from our sins by his blood." So those redeemed by Christ have been made into a kingdom of priests with free access to God but also as priests representing God to the world to His glory.

Rev. 5:10 talks about the kingdom of glory before the throne of the Lamb. Concerning 5:10b, R. H. Charles has the following to say:

The present βασιλεύουσιν, which is the harder reading, is also the right reading. . . . In the vision the Seer sees

the saints already reigning. Thus the expression is prophetic, and refers primarily to the Millennial Kingdom in XX. . . . Others explain it as preserving its natural sense on the ground that the church even then was reigning on earth, and that all things were being put under her feet as those of her Lord. Cf. Eph. 2:6; 1 Cor. 15:25.¹⁰

In my understanding Rev. 5:10 is speaking about life on the new earth, the kingdom of glory and not an earthly millennium. And seen in relation to Rev. 20:6 we can say that the Christians are made into a kingdom of priests in Christ's church in this age and in the kingdom of glory in the age to come.

The Nature and the Work of the Priesthood of All Believers

On the basis of what we have found about the priesthood in the Old Testament, Jesus' fulfillment of that priesthood, and the New Testament's teaching about the priesthood of all believers, it should be possible to conclude what the nature and the work of this priesthood is. We here also want to apply other passages in Scripture which do not have the word priesthood in them, but nevertheless talk about the nature and work of this priesthood.

Admission to the throne of Grace through Jesus' blood

As already pointed out, when Jesus had completed His vicarious atonement, the way back to God was opened for all men. Once and for all Jesus made reconciliation between God and man which includes all people through all ages (see 1 John 2:1-2). And Jesus said ". . . that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to

¹⁰R. H. Charles, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, 2 vols., The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 1:148.

all nations" (Luke 24:47). In Jesus' blood free admission to the throne of grace is provided (Heb. 10:19; 4:14-16). And this is an admission without a human mediator.

The completed priesthood of Christ is the basis for the priesthood of all believers. Those who are made partakers of His redemption are made a royal priesthood. But their priesthood is of a different character. Nothing need be, and nothing can be added to Christ's atoning priesthood. There is absolutely no condemnation for those who are in Him (Rom. 8:1). No one can bring a charge against those whom God for Christ's sake has justified (Rom. 8:31-34).

Prayer and intercession

Those who are in Christ, justified by His grace, may come to the holy God in prayer with confidence and courage. Jesus invited them to pray in His name, for example, to pray on the basis of what He is for us and with faith in Him. And He has promised that the Father will hear and answer those prayers. Yes, those who are in Christ are already acceptable to the Father (John 16:26-27) and may pray to Him. In Christ they are adopted as His children and with confidence and joy may come to God as their true heavenly Father (Rom. 8:15-17). And they have this access in prayer without any human mediator.

The Word of God admonishes the "royal priesthood" to come before the heavenly Father with thanksgiving (Eph. 5:20), and with all their needs and anxiety (Phil. 4:6). An important part of the "royal priesthood" is to make prayers and intercessions. In the Lord's prayer Jesus has given us a prayer and a model for all prayers. The

Word of God admonishes the members of the royal priesthood to pray for one another (James 5:16), praying for the coming of God's kingdom, and making intercessions "for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions . . ." (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

The privilege of prayer and intercession belongs to the priesthood of all believers.

Offering oneself for service

The royal priesthood is asked to make sacrifices, not to add anything to Christ's sacrifice, but because they are redeemed by His sacrifice they are to give themselves for service. And by serving their neighbour, they serve Christ (Matt. 25:35-36).

Now who can make sacrifices acceptable to God? When Paul in Rom. 12:1 admonished ". . . to present your bodies as a living sacrifice . . ." he was speaking to those "in Christ," to those whose ". . . body is the temple of the Holy Spirit . . ." (1 Cor. 6:19). Or as R. C. H. Lenski puts it: "Only a mind transformed and renewed (Rom. 12:2) is able to offer the body to God . . . not the old Adam but the new man in Christ."¹¹ As Jesus said that he had come to serve (Matt. 20:28), so His disciples are called to follow in His footsteps (John 13:15-16). This service starts with the renewal of the heart (Rom. 12:2), and then includes all aspects of their lives. Lenski writes, "To sacrifice the heart unto God really includes all other sacrifices, the offering to God of our whole being."¹²

¹¹R. C. H. Lenski, Kings and Priests (Burlington, Iowa: Luthern Lecture Board, 1927), p. 32.

¹²Ibid., p. 33.

This call to service is addressed to the whole universal priesthood. Cyril Eastwood writes, "All believers share the common calling. The Christian's dignity is a dignity of service, for all Christians are called to serve."¹³ And this service encompasses all aspects of their lives. It is not divided into secular and spiritual parts. Eastwood writes, "All our life-work or vocation should be the expression of our spiritual priesthood."¹⁴

This service is not a service for earning merit in order to be saved, but it is a service they render because they are saved, because they have obtained mercy (καθὼς ἡλεήθημεν 1 Cor. 4:1). It is grace (Eph. 3:8).

Ambassadors for Christ by proclaiming His Word,
and administering the keys and the Sacraments

In the exegesis of 1 Peter 2:9 we drew the conclusion that the purpose of the universal priesthood was to ". . . declare the wonderful deeds of him. . .," and that that meant to proclaim all that God in Christ has done for our salvation. As Luther says, that they should show forth the praises of God, "is nothing else than to preach God's Word."¹⁵ And when Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:19 that "the message of reconciliation" is "entrusted to us," he is thinking of all the Christians in Corinth and of all Christians who have received this message of

¹³Cyril Eastwood, The Priesthood of all Believers, an Examination of the Doctrine from Reformation to the Present Day (London: Epworth Press, 1960), p. 12.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁵Lewis William Spitz, "The Universal Priesthood of Believers with Luther's Comments," Concordia Theological Monthly, 23 (January 1952):11.

reconciliation. When he in verse 20 says that ". . . we are ambassadors of Christ . . ." he is thinking of the same. He makes no distinction between public and private. He presents it to the church in Corinth as something they all are a part of, that they have both the right and the command to do it. We will later see that this is also how Luther understood it.

Paul says that the Christians are "letters from Christ" (2 Cor. 3:3), recommending Christ. And when Paul in 2 Cor. 4:1 says: "Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart," he means that this is a ministry he has together with the other Christians. And thus the Christians of the apostolic time understood it and practiced it. When the Christians had to leave Jerusalem because of the persecution it is said about them: "Now those scattered went about preaching the word" (Acts 8:4).

When Paul says that the ministry of reconciliation is entrusted to the Christians, the church, we believe that all the different aspects of this ministry are included, both preaching and administering the keys and the sacraments.

When Jesus, after Peter's confession in Matt. 16:16, made Peter the rock and gave him the keys he gave them to him because of the confession. Peter was the representative of the church which has the same confession as Peter. That this is the right interpretation should be clear from Matt. 18:18 and John 20:23 where he gave the same authority to all the disciples. About the meaning of the keys Calvin says:

We conclude that in those passages the power of the keys is simply the preaching of the gospel, and with regard to men it is not so much power as ministry. For Christ has not given

this power actually to men, but to his Word, of which he has made men ministers.¹⁶

Luther would add to this that Christ also has given his church the authority to forgive or withhold sin in absolution.

As to the authority to administer the sacraments Paul did not think that that was a special function of the apostolate (1 Cor. 1:13-17). And in Acts we are told that Philip was baptizing (Acts 8:12,38). And concerning the Lord's Supper Paul says: "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you . . ." (1 Cor. 11:23). By "you" he must be thinking of the church in Corinth. The Lord's Supper was given to the Christian believers to administer.

On the basis of what is said above we can conclude that the ministry of the Word, the keys and the sacraments are given to the church, the community of believers. And I find Eastwood correct when he says that "in principle, therefore, all believers of our church may administer the sacraments as 'priests.'"¹⁷ But after having stated this principle we also must add according to Scripture that ". . . all things should be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). Therefore no one should proceed by himself except being called or appointed to it by the community of believers. Luther well stated the principle and its application when he in his book To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation says:

For whoever comes out of the water of baptism can boast that he is already a consecrated priest, bishop, and pope, although

¹⁶John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill, The Library of Christian Classics, 21 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975):1213.

¹⁷Eastwood, p. 44.

of course it is not seemly that just anybody should exercise such office. Because we are all priest of equal standing, no one must push himself forward and take it upon himself, without our consent and election, to do that for which we have equal authority.¹⁸

The test of teaching and preaching

Scripture strongly admonishes the Christians, the royal priesthood, that they become mature so that they will not be ". . . tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine . . ." (Eph. 4:13-16). And to the Christians in Rome Paul says that they should be on their guard toward those who are ". . . in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught . . ." (Rom. 16:17-18). And John, the apostle of love, admonishes the Christians to ". . . test the spirits to see whether they are of God . . ." (1 John 4:1). He even goes so far as to say that the Christians should not receive in their homes those who do not have the true doctrine (2 John 10-11). Lenski says it this way:

The royal priests in a congregation are responsible to their pastor. But only when that pastor brings them the Word . . . If a pastor offers as the Word what is not the Word, we must resist and never yield. Gal. 1:7-9; 2 John 10; Jude 3.¹⁹

When John talks about the testing of the spirits he does not mean to test according to their own likes or dislikes, but according to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith (1 John 4:2-3). Of those in Berea it is said that they searched the Scriptures to find out if what was preached was true (Acts 17:11). The standard

¹⁸Martin Luther, Three Treatises, from the American Edition of Luther's Works (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 14.

¹⁹Lenski, p. 54.

whereby the teaching and preaching is to be tested is the prophetic and apostolic word (Eph. 2:20).

Much harm has been done and much Christian life has been destroyed because the Christians, the royal priesthood, have not fulfilled their calling of testing, teaching and preaching in the church.

One royal priesthood to show forth His praise

The royal priesthood is one people. There are no different classes among them. There are different degrees of maturity. Not all are as filled and directed by the Spirit as others, therefore Paul admonishes them to know the will of the Lord and to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:15-18). But there are not different classes of Christians. And nowhere in Scripture do we find that what we usually call clergy and laity are two different estates. William Robinson rightly says about this:

The two words kleros (clergy) and laos (laity) appear in NT, but strange to say, they denote the same people, not different peoples. Every clergyman is a layman and every layman is a clergyman. Bishop J. B. Lightfoot of Durham, as long ago as 1878, saw this quite clearly when he wrote, "The only priest under the Gospel designated as such in the New Testament are the saints, the members of the Christian brotherhood."²⁰

The believers are called the people of God (λαός - λαός θεοῦ 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Peter 2:9-10), and in 1 Peter 5:3 the elders shall be examples of the flock-- ὁ κληρὸς , which means lot, allotment, portion, share. Here a portion of the church, a portion of the Christians are leaders. But they do not therefore become a different

²⁰William Robinson, Completing the Reformation, The Doctrine of the Priesthood of all Believers (Lexington, Kentucky: College of the Bible, 1955), p. 17.

class of Christians. In this respect we can say with Robinson that ". . . all Christians are God's laity (laos) and all are God's clergy (cleros)."²¹ As to the work of the official ministry Robinson, referring to Eph. 4:11, says: "Then the official minister's chief job is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry."²² The relationship between the official ministry and the priesthood of all believers we will discuss later. Here we want to conclude by saying that the Bible knows only one people, one class of Christians which includes all, and this people we call the priesthood of all believers, and it is the call of the whole of this people "to declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness to his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

This teaching on the universal priesthood of all believers made the New Testament church and the early church a strong and expanding church. But little by little things started to change. The distinction between laity and clergy became more and more sharp. With Cyprian (died 258) this development was about completed. It was further strengthened during the middle ages, and the result was two estates of Christians, the clergy elevated above the ordinary Christians as those administering the sacraments and ruling the church, with the laity as those who were ministered to. This was the situation at the time of the Reformation.

²¹Ibid., p. 20.

²²Ibid., p. 21.

Luther's Teaching on the Priesthood of All Believers

Lenski says that "It belongs to the credit of Luther and the work of the Reformation that the great spiritual realities of the royal priesthood of believers came to light again."²³

After Luther won clarity in the question of salvation, that man is justified by faith alone by grace alone for Christ's sake, he saw the pitiful state of the church and he sought to reform it. He appealed to the hierarchy and to the pope, but he was rejected. Then it was that Luther "firmly convinced of the priesthood of believers . . . confidently conferred upon the crown and the nobility the responsibility and the right to intervene in ecclesiastical affairs to accomplish the reform of the Church."²⁴ When Luther dared to stand up against the pope and the whole hierarchy, it was because he was convinced from the Holy Scriptures that all those who believe and are baptized are true priests, and when they who were set to publicly preach did not preach the Word of God, it was both the right and the responsibility of the spiritual priesthood of believers to make such arrangement that the Word of God was truly preached. For, said Luther in his book To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation:

All Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office . . . For baptism, gospel, and faith alone make us spiritual and a Christian people. . . .

As far as that goes, we are all consecrated priests through baptism, as St. Peter says in 1 Pet. 2:9, "You are a royal

²³Lenski, p. 8.

²⁴Martin Luther, Three Treatises, Introduction to To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), p. 5.

priesthood and a priestly realm. . . . The consecration by pope or bishop would never make a priest, and if we had no higher consecration than that which the pope or bishop gives, no one could say mass or preach a sermon or give absolution.²⁵

On this basis Luther said in the same book: "When the pope acts contrary to Scripture, it is our duty to stand by the Scriptures, to reprove him and to constrain him, according to the Word of Christ, Matt. 18:15-17."²⁶

Luther included in the priesthood of all believers that which under Chapter I²⁷ is presented as the teaching of Scripture. Of Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament priesthood he said:

The Gospel and all of Scripture present Christ as the high priest, who alone and once and for all by offering himself has taken away the sins of all men and accomplished their sanctification for all eternity. For once and for all he entered into the holy place through his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12,28; 10:12,14). Thus no other sacrifice remains for our sins than his, and by putting our trust altogether in it, we are saved from sin without any merits or works of our own.²⁸

And through the high priestly work of Christ we come into a new relationship to God. Luther wrote:

In His own person Christ is indeed the only High Priest between God and us all. Nevertheless He has also bestowed this name on us, too, so that we who believe in Him are also priests, just as we are called Christians after Him.²⁹

²⁵Ibid., p. 12.

²⁶Ibid., p. 22.

²⁷Supra, pp. 14-22.

²⁸Martin Luther, Luther's Works, vol. 40: Church and Ministry, ed. Conrad Bergendoff, gen. ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), p. 14. Hereafter this reference will be cited as LW, 40.

²⁹LW, 13:329.

Luther strongly emphasized that all Christians may come before God in prayer both for themselves and for others, and bring sacrifices, their own bodies, and serve their Saviour. Of this he said:

We call as witnesses the writings of the New Testament, to which we appeal in opposing Satan, and assert that in the New Testament there is no sacrifice except the one which is common to all, namely the one described in Rom. 12:1, where Paul teaches us to present our bodies as a sacrifice, just as Christ sacrificed his body for us on the cross. In this sacrifice he includes the offering of praise and thanksgiving.³⁰

But as priests the Christians are also called to preach God's Word, to bind and to loose and to administer the sacraments. Luther said:

But the office of the keys belongs to all of us who are Christians, as I have so often proved and shown in my books against the pope. For the word of Christ in Matt. 18:15 is addressed not only to the Apostles, but certainly to all the brethren, Matt. 18:17-18. . . . As we have declared already, the ministry of the Word . . . belongs to all. To bind and to loose clearly is nothing else than to proclaim and to apply the gospel.³¹

What Christ has bestowed upon the universal priesthood of all believers Luther summed up in this way:

Here we take our stand: There is no other Word of God than that which is given to all Christians to proclaim. There is no other baptism than the one which any Christian can bestow. There is no other remembrance of the Lord's Supper than that which any Christian can observe and which Christ has instituted. There is no other kind of sin than that which any Christian can bind or loose. There is no other sacrifice than the body of every Christian. No one but a Christian can pray. No one but a Christian may judge of doctrine. These make the priestly and the royal office.³²

³⁰LW, 40:28.

³¹LW, 40:26-27.

³²Ibid., pp. 34-35.

Luther strongly emphasized that there are not different estates of Christians. There is only one people of God. In the book To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation he said:

It follows from this argument that there is no true, basic difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status. They are all of the spiritual estate, all are true priests, bishops, and popes. But they do not all have the same work to do. Just as all priests and monks do not have the same work. This is the teaching of St. Paul in Rom. 12:4-5 and 1 Cor. 12:12 and in 1 Pet. 2:9, as I have said above, namely, that we are all one body of Christ the Head, and all members one of another. Christ does not have two different bodies, one temporal, the other spiritual. There is but one Head and one body.³³

Seen against the background of his time we understand how radical Luther's view was. Next to justification by faith the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is the great heritage of the Lutheran reformation. Some have held that Luther in his later life changed his views on this doctrine. That is not so, however. Against the enthusiasts he emphasized the importance of the ministry and insisted that no one should preach without having been called but we see nowhere that he changed his mind as to the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers. Also in his later writings we find this doctrine of the priesthood of all believers as well as we in his early writings find statements saying that the ministry is ordained by God, and that no one should hold the public preaching office without having been called to it (compare Chapter I.³⁴).

³³Luther, Three Treatises, pp. 14-15.

³⁴Supra, pp. 17-20.

The Place of the Teaching on the Priesthood of All
Believers in Later Theological Development

Melanchthon did not have the same high esteem for the universal priesthood as Luther had. It is reasonable to consider that as the main reason why the confessions do not treat this important doctrine more explicitly. And yet, in the "Treatise on the Power and the Primacy of the Pope," which was written by Melanchthon, he wrote directly about the principles of the priesthood of all believers as a basic doctrine for the life and the function of the church.³⁵ Article X in the Smalcald Articles also alluded to this doctrine. And I think Leif Grane (professor of church history, Copenhagen) is right when he says that the Augsburg Confession should be interpreted on the background of Luther's theological work which was its fundamental presupposition.³⁶

As to the later development in the Lutheran church, I think Fred L. Precht is correct when he says:

Lutheran dogmaticians of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries hardly more than allude to the doctrine of the spiritual priesthood as such The Lutheran dogmaticians are most emphatic in their distinction between the ministry of the church and the priesthood of all believers.³⁷

³⁵The Book of Concord, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), pp. 331-32.

³⁶Leif Grane, Confession Augustana (Gyldendal: 1963), p. 7: "Det siger sig selv, at foruden alle disse dokumenter, som udgør CAs öjensynlige foudsetninger eller følger, bör bekjendelsen ses i sammenheng med hele Luthers teologiske virke, hvori den har en baerende forudsætning." Trans.: "It goes without saying that in addition to the documents which are the obvious presuppositions, the confession ought to be seen in relation to the whole theological work of Luther as its fundamental presupposition."

³⁷Fred L. Precht, "The Doctrine of the Universal Priesthood of Believers and its Exemplification in Reformation and Reformation Hymnody" (Thesis S.T.M., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1961), pp. 60-61.

There might be different reasons why the doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers did not have a greater impact on the Lutheran Church. Luther says in the foreword to the German Mass that he does not have the necessary Christian people to organize that church as he would have liked to.³⁸ Cyril Eastwood looks at it in this way:

Luther also connects the priesthood of believers with the call to preach. He asserts that it is this doctrine which is the basis for the Christians right to preach. There has never been, however, as far as preaching is concerned, a thorough going application of the doctrine among the laity of Lutheranism. There seems to be two reasons for this:

- 1) The Lutherans distinguish between the Apostle of the early church and the modern apostle.
- 2) The doctrine of the priesthood of believers has tended to remain in the sphere of dogma and has not become a practical factor in the life of the church.³⁹

This statement, however, does not give the whole answer. Both in teaching and in practice there have been different emphases also within the Lutheran Church. And there is also a strong relationship between the spiritual condition of the church and the emphasis of the priesthood of all believers. Hans Asmussen states this well when he says:

Alle Gläubigen sind Priester. Dieses Zeugnis gehört zu den unaufgebbaren Wahrheiten. Es kan verdulkelt werden, und kann auch für einige Zeit ganz vestummen. Wenn das aber geshieht, sinkt das Nivau der Christenheit in demselben Masse, wie das Zeugnis an Klarheit verliert. Die hohen Zeiten der Christenheit bringen eine klare Anschauung davon mit sich, dass alle christen Priester sind.⁴⁰

³⁸ Martin Luther, Luther's Works, vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns, ed. Ulrich S. Leupold, gen. ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), pp. 62-63.

³⁹ Eastwood, p. 225.

⁴⁰ Hans Asmussen, Das Priestentum aller Glaubigen (Stuttgart: Im Quell-Verlag der Evang. Gesellschaft, n.d.), p. 5.

Church history bears witness to this. We may think of the New Testament and early church, the Reformation, and how the pietistic movement renewed both the teaching and the practice of the priesthood of all believers both in Germany and Scandinavia and how the same happened in the Methodist revival in England. In Norway, since the Hans Nilsen Hauge revival, which started about two hundred years ago, the teaching and practice of the universal priesthood of believers was revived and has had great impact on the Christian life in the country ever since.

Luther's rediscovery of the priesthood of all believers also had strong influence on the other protestant churches. Calvin strongly emphasized that Christ was the fulfillment of the Old Testament priesthood and that we "in communion with Christ become colleagues of His priesthood."⁴¹ Calvin relates it especially to a man's calling or vocation.

The strongest emphasis of the universal priesthood of believers we find in the Congregational, Baptist and Methodist churches. Eastwood states that: "It may justly be said that while Lutheranism has relaxed her hold upon this vital truth, Methodism has reaffirmed it both in doctrine and practice."⁴²

In our day there is a renewed interest in this doctrine and in ways to better unfold the potential of Christians in the life of the church.

⁴¹Eastwood, p. 77.

⁴²Ibid., p. 193.

The Authority and Function
of the Priesthood of All Believers

Authorized by Christ and His Word to be a royal priesthood

The universal priesthood is of royal character. It is instituted by Christ and belongs to Christ who is the head. As Thomas Lindsay says it:

While the authority belongs to the whole membership, and is therefore democratic, it nevertheless comes from above and is therefore theocratic. It comes from Jesus Christ who is the head of the church.⁴³

Luther also very strongly emphasized that Christ in heaven is the head of the church, and the church can have no earthly head. And commenting on Matt. 16:18-19; 18:18, Luther said that ". . . the keys are given to St. Peter in place of the entire community, and not to his person alone."⁴⁴ Eastwood explains this well when he says:

The power of the keys is given in answer to Peter's confession of faith. The question is: Who possesses this faith, who does believe? And the answer is: All believers. The key is not entrusted to the individual, but to the Church and congregation.⁴⁵

As we have seen in Chapter I⁴⁶ this authority includes all aspects of the life of the church. And Luther only re-affirmed the teaching of Scripture (Chapter I⁴⁷). And as Thomas Lindsay says:

⁴³Thomas Lindsay, The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries (New York: George H. Doran Company, n.d.), p. 25.

⁴⁴Martin Luther, Luther's Works, vol. 39: Church and Ministry, ed. Eric W. Gritsch, gen. ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 86. Hereafter this reference will be cited as LW, 39.

⁴⁵Eastwood, p. 34.

⁴⁶Supra, pp. 14-23.

⁴⁷Supra, pp. 23-27.

It is impossible to avoid noticing how the ancient manuals of church organization have caught the spirit of Christ's teaching, that there are to be no lordships in His Church. . . . Whatever power and authority the Church of Christ possesses in gift from the Lord resides in the membership of the Church and not in a superior rank of officials who have received authority over the Church directly from Christ Himself.⁴⁸

The universal priesthood is royal in character, but also in authority. Not only part of it is royal, but all the believers are royal. But it must be exercised ". . . decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40).

Function according to the principle of the gifts of grace

At the beginning of this paper I mentioned that one of the expressions used for the church is that it is the body of Christ. In Rom. 12:4 Paul says: "For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function . . ." So it is with the church of Christ. The believers have different gifts (Rom. 12:6), consequently they also have different functions. In 1 Cor. 12:14-28 Paul uses the same argument about the body and its members and applies it to the church. As for the members of the body, it is necessary that believers have different gifts and consequently different functions in order that the church, the body of Christ, may function properly. Some gifts are well noticed, others are covered, unnoticed, but they are nevertheless necessary for the organism of the Christian fellowship. Paul is thanking God that the Corinthian Christians ". . . are not lacking in any spiritual gift . . ." (1 Cor. 1:7). He only exhorts them that each believer should function in the communion

⁴⁸Lindsay, pp. 31-32.

of believers according to his gift. Hendrik Kraemer says: "The New Testament deals mainly with functions and vocations, not with 'offices' as a rule."⁴⁹ Luther in his exposition of Psalm 110, after having talked about the spiritual priesthood, talks about how it is endowed to function and said:

Well, what is this "holy adornment," these priestly garments which adorn the Christian so that they become His holy priesthood? Nothing else than the beautiful, divine, and various gifts of the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul (Eph. 4:11-12) and St. Peter (1 Pet. 4:10) say, which were given to Christendom to advance the knowledge and the praise of God, a function which is carried out pre-eminently by the ministry of the preaching of the Gospel. For St. Paul says that these gifts exist "for the common good" of Christendom (1 Cor. 12:7). . . . Whatever we do, our teaching and our life ought to shine like beacon of light to the greater knowledge, honor, and praise of God, as Christ also says (Matt. 5:16). And that St. Peter says (1 Pet. 2:9).⁵⁰

Here Luther emphasized the same principle as the apostle Paul that the universal priesthood should function according to the gift of the Spirit each is given to the glory of God and for the edification of the church, but that no one should proceed by himself to the public office without being called by the brethren.

Hans von Campenhausen goes too far in saying that the Corinthian congregation had a wholly charismatic leadership with no offices. But in the following statement he emphasized an important factor in the function of the church:

Every genuine gift, whether high or lowly, is indeed an operation of the Spirit. It is therefore not human but divine, and must be affirmed and acknowledged as authoritative. But this means that its exponents, precisely because they are

⁴⁹Hendrik Kraemer, A Theology of the Laity (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), pp. 19-20.

⁵⁰LW, 13:294-95.

spiritual men, are involved in a corporate whole in which and through which the Spirit of Christ shows its power, and this Spirit alone is sovereign.⁵¹

Function according to the order of creation: The relationship of men and women in the service

Paul argued strongly that before God we are all alike, men and women, slave and free (Gal. 3:28). But as to function there is a difference. In marriage the husband is the head of the family (Eph. 5:22-24). And in the church a woman should not be in a position of authority and teaching over men. And he based this on the order of creation (1 Tim. 2:11-15). As he taught the Corinthian congregation about the function of the gifts of the Spirit, the gifts of grace, he reminded them of this, too (1 Cor. 14:33-34). His arguments were not based on contemporary customs but on the creation ordinances, which is God's own order of the relationship between men and women also as to their function in the church. Luther said about this:

They are all alike and only a spiritual people (Gal. 3:28). Therefore they are all priests. All may proclaim God's Word, except that, as St. Paul teaches in 1 Cor. 14:34, women should not speak in the congregation. They should let man preach, because God commands them to be obedient to their husbands. God does not interfere with the arrangement. But He makes no distinction in the matter of authority. If, however, only women were present and no men, as in nunneries, then one of the women might be authorized to preach.⁵²

⁵¹Hans von Campenhausen, Ecclasiastical Power in the Churches of the First Three Centuries (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1967), p. 63.

⁵²Martin Luther, Luther's Works, vol. 30: The Catholic Epistles, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, associate ed. Walter A. Hansen, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 55. Hereafter this reference will be cited as LW, 30.

This does not mean that the woman does not have a function in the church. Jesus chose only men as his apostles, but He had nevertheless many women who were serving in different capacities. We see that women also in the apostolic time were serving in the church and giving their testimony about Christ in word and in service, but they were not in a leading and ruling position.

The Priesthood of All Believers and Order of the Church

Not confusion, but order

If the universal priesthood has such an authority as mentioned above, will not the result become confusion? The church as the body of Christ where the believers are members of this body and function according to their gifts of grace, tell of harmony and not confusion. But if the church gets carnal and thinks according to the flesh, there will be jealousy and strife. This danger was present in the Corinthian Church as some said they belonged to Paul, others to Apollos, and so forth (1 Cor. 3:1-4). Therefore Paul later in chapter 12 taught them how the church was to function as a body in harmony, where each member serves according to his gift of grace given him by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12), and where the gifts work together in love (chapter 13), and where the gifts have the appropriate proportion (chapter 14). Paul did not say that there were too many gifts in Corinth or sought to quench any of them, but he admonished that the different gifts should function in harmony and in the right proportion, and that "all things should be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). Paul wrote the same to Timothy (1 Tim. 3:14-15). And although the church in Corinth had many spiritual gifts it was not without preaching and

leadership as some seem to think. They had apostles, prophets, teachers and administrators (1 Cor. 12:28). Some of these gifts seem to have had a permanent function or office. This leads us to our next point.

The priesthood of all believers and the various offices in the church

We believe there is unity of teaching in the Scriptures. In order to understand, therefore, the function of the church, we cannot look only at the letter to the Corinthian church, but also at Acts and the other epistles. Already returning from the first missionary journey, the apostle Paul ". . . appointed elders for them in every church. . ." (Acts 14:23), and in the last part of his ministry we know from the Pastoral Epistles that he did the same. It is natural to believe that some of the gifts of grace mentioned in the other letters allude to the function of the elder, and that also some of the other gifts are permanent functions or offices in the church, although we must bear in mind that the church did not have paid officers in our sense of the word for the first two centuries,⁵³ even if some kind of an allowance was practiced (compare Gal. 6:6; 1 Cor. 9:8-14). And as Lindsay says:

The theocratic element was not given in a hierarchy imposed upon the church from without; it manifested itself within the community. It appeared in the presence, recognition and use made of the gifts of government bestowed upon the membership which were none the less spiritual, divine and from above.⁵⁴

⁵³Lindsay, p. 201.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 33.

It has been discussed whether Luther in his early ministry held that the preaching ministry was founded in the priesthood of all believers but later changed and emphasized that it was instituted directly by God. But even as early as 1520 in the book To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation where he so strongly emphasized the priesthood of all believers he also said:

I want to speak only of the ministry which God had instituted, the responsibility of which is to minister words and sacraments to a congregation, among whom they reside.⁵⁵

Luther did not see any contradiction between the universal priesthood and the preaching ministry. In his commentary to Psalm 110:4 where he also strongly emphasized the universal priesthood he said:

This priestly office properly belongs to Christ and is completely derived from Him. He alone is the One for whose sake God's grace and forgiveness are bestowed. Consequently, He personally began the office of the public preaching of the Gospel and commanded the apostles to disseminate the Gospel throughout the world until the Last Day. This office of preaching derives from Him who is Himself the High Priest, and the only content of its message is about Him.⁵⁶

These two emphases in Luther may seem contradictory, but rightly understood they need not be so.

The gospel of reconciliation is given to the whole church (2 Cor. 5:19). All have the equal right and responsibility of proclaiming this gospel, and each should share in this task according to his gifts of grace. But according to the New Testament some of these gifts of the ascended Christ are definitely intended to be permanent functions or offices in the church in performing this one ministry of

⁵⁵Luther, Three Treatises, p. 66.

⁵⁶LW, 13:317.

the gospel (Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28). The Augsburg Confession, Article V, speaks of this ministry. In a footnote comment to this article Theodore G. Tappert says:

This title would be misleading if it were not observed (as the text of the article makes clear) that the Reformers thought of "the office of the ministry" in other than clerical terms.⁵⁷

In the New Testament the ministry of the gospel was performed through a variety of functions. Different numbers are mentioned in the different letters and Paul seems to be allowing a variety which may change from place to place and differ according to the need of the congregation, as the following statement of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod says:

Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions do not, however, teach that this Ministry must have one form, but rather show that various functions of the Ministry may be performed by various men. According to their functions they may be called elders, bishops, pastors, or teachers. The church distributes the various functions included in the Gospel Ministry among a greater or smaller number of persons, according to need and circumstances.⁵⁸

The different functions of this ministry of the gospel will be discussed more thoroughly in the last part of this thesis.

The priesthood of all believers and the call to the various offices

The New Testament teaches that some were appointed or elected to the teaching, preaching and leadership and other services in the

⁵⁷The Book of Concord, p. 31.

⁵⁸The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Ministry and its Relation to the Christian Church, March 1973, p. 9.

church. How they were elected or appointed is not easy to say. The seven "deacons" in Acts 6 seem to have been chosen from the congregation, and when Paul appointed elders (Acts 14:23), the word χειροτονέω (stretch out the hand, to constitute by voting, to appoint) is used and would suggest that the laymen had something to say in this matter. And it is reasonable to believe that Titus did it the same way (Titus 1:5).

Luther strongly emphasized that it is the right of universal priesthood of believers to appoint persons for the public preaching ministry. Writing about those called to teach and preach Luther says:

Such people are to be chosen by the church only for the sake of the office. They are to be separated from the common mass of Christians in the same way as in secular government where certain people of the citizenry of the municipality are chosen and appointed as officials. One does not become a citizen by being elected burgomaster or judge, but one is elected to the office because one already possesses citizenship and is a member of the citizenry. A burgomaster, therefore, brings his citizenship with him into office. . . .

This is the way it is in Christendom, too. . . .

For although we are all priests, this does not mean that all of us can preach, teach, and rule. Certain ones of the multitude must be selected and separated for such an office. And he who has such an office is not a priest because of his office, but a servant of all the others, who are priests. When he is no longer able to preach and serve, or if he no longer wants to do so, he once more becomes a part of the common multitude of Christians. His office is conveyed to someone else, and he becomes a Christian like any other.⁵⁹

The communion of believers chose among themselves those to whom the Lord had bestowed the gifts of grace (Eph. 4:11) and who had the necessary human and spiritual qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-7) to fill the functions or offices of preaching, teaching, ruling, and so forth, in the church.

⁵⁹LW, 13:331-32.

The Holy Spirit the Governing Factor in the Function of the Universal Priesthood

It is by the work of the Holy Spirit that the universal priesthood comes into being as Paul says in Titus 3:5, and which Luther expressed when he said:

Thus it also happens in the case of a divine birth from water and the Spirit. You can see the water of Baptism as you can see the dew, and you can hear the external or spoken Word as you can hear the wind; but you cannot see or understand the Spirit, or what He accomplishes thereby: that a human being is cleansed in Baptism and becomes a saint in the hands of the priest, so that from a child of hell he is changed into a child of God.⁶⁰

In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul time and again repeated that the Holy Spirit is the governing factor in the work of the different members of the body. The Holy Spirit renews the body, the spiritual priesthood, keeps it together and makes it function in harmony for the mutual blessing of all, to the glory of God and to the proclamation of Christ's gospel. But Richard R. Caemmerer is right when he says that "the royal priesthood flourishes only in people who are directly in touch with God."⁶¹ Therefore it is also true when he continues:

The doctrine of the royal priesthood is not merely an earmark of the ideal church, but it is the safeguard for the validity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in people. Where people and pastors neglect this doctrine, the "Church" does not necessarily decay--it may flourish as an institution; but the church ceases to be the Church, and people cease to draw on God in Christ for their spiritual life and energies.⁶²

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 303.

⁶¹Richard R. Caemmerer, "The Universal Priesthood and The Pastor," Concordia Theological Monthly, 19 (August 1948):576.

⁶²Ibid., p. 572.

The function of the priesthood of all believers can be taken as a barometer of the spiritual condition of the life of the church. But the Holy Spirit works through the means of grace and uses human beings who believe in Christ to further and guide his church (compare, Acts 13:2-4).

CHAPTER II

THE GIFTS OF GRACE

In the previous section the gifts of grace were mentioned several times. In fact, the priesthood of all believers and the gifts of grace are so closely linked together that they are inseparable. It is therefore natural to continue this study with the discussion of the gifts of grace. This will hopefully throw light on the previous chapter and again prepare for the last part of this paper about the ministry.

The Nature of the Gifts of Grace

There are at least three different characteristics which reveal the nature of the gifts of grace.

Given by grace

The first characteristic is that they are given by grace. The Greek word used is χάρισμα which again is derived from χάρις = grace. χάρισμα is sometimes used about the gift of salvation by grace in Jesus Christ, as in Rom. 5:15,16,23. In this connection the word tells us that salvation is completely undeserved from our side. It is given by God's unmerited favour because of the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament, however, the word χάρισμα is mostly used to denote endowments given to the believer to equip him for service in God's kingdom. This second meaning is closely linked

to the first one. Also in the last meaning it denotes an unmerited gift from our side. As the believer becomes a partaker of the salvation in Jesus Christ by grace, he also receives a gift, an endowment for serving Christ and his church, also given by grace. Jesus talked about the same, for instance in the parable in Matt. 25:14-30 about the talents which were entrusted to the servants for them to use, and for which they had to give account later. Paul says that the Christians are "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1). For performing this stewardship Christ has given unmerited gifts of his grace, to equip people for this stewardship.

Given by the Holy Spirit

Those gifts equipping for service are worked by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:11). Paul stressed that the different gifts are worked by the same Spirit. They are also in 1 Cor. 12:1 and 14:1 called "spiritual gifts," which we believe is the correct translation of τῶν πνευματικῶν (1 Cor. 12:1) and τὰ πνευματικά (1 Cor. 14:1). They could be genitive and accusative masculine, and then refer to persons, as some interpreters take them, but in the context it is natural to take them as neuter and as referring to spiritual gifts. Luther took them this way, and most translators do the same. Lenski is right when he says:

The plea that in the course of elaboration Paul mentions persons is met by the fact that he also mentions gifts, and that when gifts are discussed, the persons having them will also be indicated.¹

¹R. C. H. Lenski, Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians (Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1937), pp. 489-90.

Jesus promised His disciples that He would send His Holy Spirit upon them and then they would be empowered to be witnesses of the gospel (Acts 1:8). By the gifts of the Spirit Christ equipped His disciples for the ministry of the gospel, and so He equips His disciples today. But Welch is right when he says that:

To have the Spirit is not to have something other or more than Christ (this is the error of Montanists and Schärmerei of all ages, and of modern immanentists of a milder, less spirited type); it is precisely to have Christ, to be brought into the body which is his body, to be formed in his image, to acknowledge Christ's lordship and to bear witness to him.²

The truth of this is shown in 1 Cor. 12:3. Only by the Holy Spirit can a person accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and only by the working of the Holy Spirit can a person be a witness to Christ.

Each Christian given one or more gifts

Some interpreters interpret πνευματικῶν (1 Cor. 12:1) and πνευματικά (1 Cor. 14:1) to mean persons and insist that only some in the congregation may be called spiritual and equipped with gifts for ministering in the church as Moritz Lauterburg says:

πνευματικά(οι) . . . bloss einzelne Gemeindeglieder, solche nämlich, welche durch charismatische Begabung und Leistung irgendwie über die andern hervorragen.³

Arnold Bittlinger, however, in the article "Gnadengaben im Neuen Testament nach 1 Korinther 12-14" says that "jeder Christ hat seinem Auftrag, sein Charisma (vgl. 1 Cor. 12.7-11; Rom. 12.5-18; Eph. 4.11-16;

²Claude Welch, The Reality of the Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 222.

³Moritz Lauterburg, Begriff de Charisma und seine Bedeutung fur die praktische Theologie (Gutersloh: Druck und Verlag von C. Bertelsmann, 1898), p. 19.

1 Pet.4-10)." ⁴ This is definitely what Scripture teaches. Peter explicitly said that each believer has received a gift (1 Peter 4:10). And the picture of the church as the body of Christ where all the believers are members with different functions also indicates that each has the gift for his function, as Bittlinger says it: "Die Aussage: ein Leib--viele Glieder wird konkretisiert durch die Aussage: eine Gemeinde--viele Dienste." ⁵

Each Christian has, according to Scripture, at least one gift of grace, gift of the Spirit. Others may have several (compare Matt. 25:15). Whether one or more, each is called to serve according to the gift, or gifts, he or she has received (1 Peter 4:10; Matt. 25:19-30). The question is not whether one has one or more gifts, or whether the gift is conspicuous or unnoticed. The important thing is to be trustworthy to what one has received (1 Cor. 4:1-2), and to be faithful in using it (Matt. 25:21,23). And by using it the gift will increase (Matt. 25:21,23).

The Question of Natural and Super-Natural Gifts

Some will divide the gifts of grace into two categories. Gifts as teaching and preaching, gifts of wisdom and of knowledge, and so forth, they call natural gifts, while gifts of healing, tongues, and so forth, they call super-natural gifts. Others explain all the gifts

⁴Arnold Bittlinger, "Gnadengaben im Neuen Testament nach 1 Korinther 12-14," Kirche und Charisma, Die Gaben des Heiligen Geistes im neuen Testament, in der Kirchengeschichte und in der Gegenwart, P. Paul Vergese, et al, (Marburg an der Lahn: Oekumenischer Verlag Dr. R. F. Edel, 1966), p. 41.

⁵Ibid., p. 47.

as natural endowments which are sanctified by the Spirit to serve in the church, as Lauterberg says:

. . . Das Charisma entsteht, indem das Pneuma in einem bestimmten Menschen auf einem bestimmten Punkt trifft, der unter dieser Einwirkung sofort und bereitwillig eine schöne, auch für andere segensreiche Entfaltung bekommt. So sind die Charismen zwar etwas durchaus Neues im Christenstand, aber sie erwachsen auf den Boden der Naturbestimmtheit.⁶

Arnold Bittlinger views the question in the same way when he says:

"Ein Charismatiker ist ein Mensch, der durch die Wirkung des Heiligen Geistes zu seinen natürlichen Begabung befreit wird und sie zum Aufbau der Gemeinde in Dienste stellt."⁷

Do the Scriptures say this, however? No, the Scriptures say that the gifts are given, not according to the merits of man, but they are gifts that God in his mercy had given as unmerited gifts of grace. Also, these gifts are worked by the Holy Spirit. Therefore they belong to another realm than the natural endowments and talents. But since it is the triune God who works in creation as well as in redemption, He may sanctify natural talents and endowments by His Spirit to the work in his kingdom. But then they are not gifts of grace because they are natural talents, but because they are sanctified by the Holy Spirit by God's grace and as such they are useful. Therefore it is true what Joseph Brosch says that we are not able ". . . innerhalb der Gnadengaben etwa zwischen übernatürlichen und natürlichen, oder zwischen ausserordentlich und ordentlichen zu

⁶Lauterburg, p. 36.

⁷Arnold Bittlinger, Charisma und Amt (Stuttgart: Calver Verlag, 1967), p. 14.

unterscheiden."⁸ The apostle Paul makes no distinction between them when he presents them. Teachers are placed at the side of workers of miracles and administrators together with in various kinds of tongues (1 Cor. 12:28). It is as Donald Bridge and David Phypers say:

But what must be grasped is that, startling or ordinary, controversial or universally accepted, all these gifts are in fact referred to as charisma, and all are set within exactly the same context of the working of the body of Christ, the activity of the Spirit of God.⁹

What we have said above is important in order to get the right understanding of the work and the function of the gifts of grace, and also their relationship. Otherwise we easily come to think that some of the gifts are more spiritual and of a higher quality than others, and because of this we come to a false evaluation of both the different gifts and their work, which might be both unbalanced and unscriptural, and which will be very detrimental to their proper function.

The Different Kinds of Gifts as They are Presented in
Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; 12:28-30; Eph. 4:7-11

We note that the apostle Paul did not mention the same gifts in all his letters. This seems to indicate that Paul did not insist that there is a fixed number of gifts of grace, but that they even may vary from place to place and that not all of them function at the same time. In the pastoral epistles he mentions different functions and offices such as elders, deacons, deaconesses, without talking

⁸ Joseph Brosch, Charismen und Amter in der Urkirche (Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlag, 1951), p. 33.

⁹ Donald Bridge and David Phypers, Spiritual Gifts and the Church (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), p. 25.

specifically about the gifts of grace. He indicates, though, that the offices are functions of gifts of grace (compare 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; 1 Tim. 3:2). Peter talks about the gifts in general without specification (1 Peter 4:10-11). Following is an enumeration of the gifts which normally are found in the Christian Church, even if not all necessarily are given simultaneously or at the same place. And not all have the same importance.

<u>Rom. 12:6-8</u>	<u>1 Cor. 12:4-11</u>	<u>1 Cor. 12:28-30</u>	<u>Eph. 4:7-11</u>
Prophecy προφητεία	Utterance of wisdom λόγος σοφίας	Apostles ἀποστόλος	Apostles ἀπόστολοι
Service διακονία	Utterance of knowledge λόγος γνώσεως	Prophets προφήται	Prophets προφήται
The gift of teaching ὁ διδάσκων	Faith by the same Spirit πίστις ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι	Teachers διδάσκαλοι	Evangelists εὐαγγελισταί
The gift of exhortation ὁ παρακαλῶν	The gift of healing χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων	Workers of miracles δυνάμεις	Pastors ποιμένες
The gift of contribution with charity ὁ μεταδιδούς ἐν ἀπλότῃ	Working of miracles ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων	Healers χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων	Teachers διδασκάλοι
Giving leader- ship with zeal ὁ προϊστάμενος ἐν σπουδῇ	Prophecies προφητεία	Helpers ἀντιλήμψεις	
Acts of mercy with cheer- fulness ὁ ἐλεῶν ἐν ἰλαρότητι	Distinguish between spirits διακρίσεις πνευμάτων	Administrators κυβερνήσεις	
	Various kinds of tongues γένη γλωσσῶν	Various kinds of tongues γένη γλωσσῶν	
	Interpretation of tongues ἐρμηνεία γλωσσῶν		

The Nature and the Work of the Gifts of Grace

This section is divided into two parts, the first discussing the permanent functions and offices while the second deals with those not connected with any definite function or office. The distinction, however, is rather artificial since it is difficult to make a clear distinction between them. Those in the last category may well be possessed by one who has permanent office. And a gift in the first category listed as a permanent office may be possessed by one who has no fixed office. It is necessary to have this in mind as we study the different gifts.

Those connected with permanent functions and offices

Apostle -- The apostle Paul did not always mention the gifts in the same order. But where he mentioned them (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11) he mentioned apostles first, and in 1 Cor. 12:28 he gave the priorities for the first three, with apostle as the first.

There are differences of opinion among scholars as to who are to be counted among the apostles. Lenski says that the apostles were "those who were immediately called by Christ, the Twelve, and Paul and Mathias."¹⁰ Other scholars hold that the apostles cannot be limited to the twelve, but that persons such as Barnabas (Acts 14:4,14) James, the Lord's brother (Gal. 1:19) and others are mentioned as apostles. And as one commentary says: "There could not have been false apostles (2 Cor. 11:13) unless the number of Apostles had been

¹⁰Lenski, p. 538.

indefinite."¹¹ Critical scholars even say that "one cannot in any case speak of a connection between the historical Jesus and the twelve apostles."¹² This reveals an unacceptable view of Scripture.

The solution seems to be to distinguish, as some scholars do, between apostles in a narrow and a wide sense. In the narrow sense the apostles are the twelve chosen by Jesus, commissioned and authorized by Him (Matt. 28:19; John 15:26-27), Mathias who was chosen instead of Judas (Acts 1:15-26), and Paul (Gal. 1:1,15-17). A criterion for the apostles was that they had seen the Lord (1 Cor. 9:1-2), been together with Him and witnessed His resurrection (Acts 1:21-23).

The apostles had a special mission in the church. They were witnesses of Christ's death and resurrection (Luke 24:48; Acts 2:32). They were authorized by Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to give the right proclamation of the gospel of Christ (John 15:26-27; 16:12-15). Therefore the words of the apostles, together with the Scriptures of the Old Testament (2 Tim. 3:15-17), are the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20) and the standard for all proclamation and interpretation of the gospel (1 Thess. 2:13). In the narrow sense the apostolate cannot be transferred to anyone else.

The apostles in the wider sense, such as Barnabas (Acts 14:4,14) Timothy and Silvanus (1 Thess. 1:1; 2:6) and the many others who continued to carry out the apostolic commission to preach the gospel of

¹¹Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, in International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), p. 279.

¹²Walter Schmithals, The Office of Apostle in the Early Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), p. 71.

Christ and establish churches where Christ and his gospel was not known (Matt. 28:19) were apostles in the wider sense. Lindsay says:

As the earlier decades passed the number of men who were called apostles increased rather than diminished. They were the wandering missionaries whose special duties were to the heathen and to the unconverted.¹³

Prophets -- The next in the order are the prophets, or those who have the gift of prophesy. The prophets played an important part in both the apostolic and the postapostolic church. A prophet is often thought of as one who foretells the future. But, as Abbott says: "'Foretelling' is not implied in the word either etymologically or in classical or New Testament usage. In classical writers it is used of interpreters of gods."¹⁴ Also in the Old Testament the task of the prophet was not primarily to foretell the future, but to proclaim and to apply God's Word to the situation of the people, which also included sometimes foretelling the future. The apostle Paul admonished Christians to seek the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:1) which he characterized as a preaching for ". . . upbuilding and encouragement and consolation" (1 Cor. 14:3). Robertson and Plummer explain prophecy rather well when they say:

They were inspired to utter the deep things of God, for the conviction of sin, for edification, and comfort; sometimes also for predicting the future, as in the case of Agabus.¹⁵

¹³Lindsay, p. 82.

¹⁴T. K. Abbott, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians, in International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), p. 117.

¹⁵Robertson and Plummer, p. 278.

The main reason why prophecy came into disrepute seems to have been that they did not follow the apostolic exhortation (1 Cor. 14:29) "to weigh what is said." Lindsay points to the reason when he says:

"Every prophet," says the oldest ecclesiastical manual, "who speaketh in the Spirit, ye shall neither try nor judge; for every sin shall be forgiven, but that sin shall not be forgiven."¹⁶

Evangelists -- The third gift which is mentioned in Ephesians is that of the evangelist. As a specific gift it is mentioned only here. But Philip who was elected "deacon" (Acts 6:5) is also called the evangelist (Acts 21:8). And Timothy who was an ordained elder (1 Tim. 4:14) must also have had the gift of an evangelist since Paul admonishes him to fulfill his ministry as evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5). The possibility is also that the elders did not ordain him to be an elder but an evangelist.

The task of the evangelist must have been to go forth from an established congregation and preach the gospel to those who were not Christians and establish congregations, as Philip did when he went from Jerusalem to Samaria (Acts 8:6-14) and along the coast to Caesarea (Acts 8:40). In the case of Timothy, even if he also ministered in established congregations (1 Tim. 4:11-16) it is also natural to think that he, according to 2 Tim. 4:1-5, also was ministering to the heathens and unbelievers as an evangelist. It seems that the evangelists, as well as the apostles and prophets, worked in a wider area than a local congregation.

¹⁶Lindsay, p. 213.

Pastor--Teacher--Elder--Bishop -- These different gifts are so inter-related, and some of them even synonymous, that it seems most useful to discuss them together in one section.

Elder and bishop were clearly used synonymously as in Acts 20:17,28 and Titus 1:5,7. The word bishop denotes the nature of their work. For being elected an elder-bishop a number of qualifications were mentioned with respect to both human character and spiritual qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). Among them the gift of teaching and the ability to instruct (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9). Paul exhorted the elders-bishops from Ephesus to shepherd the church (ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ). What is used as a verb, has the same basic meaning as the noun ποιμένες . And in the letter to the Ephesians when Paul definitely had to refer to the same people as in Acts 20:28, he called them pastors (ποιμένες) and teachers (διδάσκαλοι). Peter also admonished the elders to "tend the flock of God (ποιμάνετε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποίμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ)(1 Peter 5:1-2). Peter here definitely remembered the words of the Lord (John 21:15-17) where he had been asked to tend and to feed the flock. Peter exhorted them to rule, not by force, but by example (1 Peter 5:3).

The gifts of administration (κυβερνήσεις), as Paul mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:28, and leadership (ὁ προϊστάμενος) may well be connected with the group pastor-teacher-elder-bishop. It is natural to believe, and there is evidence in Scripture, that not all of this group had the same gifts. From 1 Tim. 5:17 it is natural to infer that among the elders-bishops (which according to the preceding interpretation included pastor and teachers) there were different

gifts. Some engaged in administration, rule and leadership, while others were mainly occupied in teaching and preaching. (Compare Heb. 13:17). When Paul in the Epistle to the Romans (12:6-8) did not mention elder-bishops and pastors, but teachers (ὁ διδάσκων) and those in leadership (ὁ προϊστάμενος), he may have been thinking of the same group mentioned above.

It is much discussed whether pastors and teachers in Eph. 4:11 are the same people. As Abbott states it:

τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους (Eph. 4:11).
The first question is whether these words express distinct offices or two characters of the same office. Many commentators, both ancient and modern, adopt the former view, differing, however, greatly in their definitions.¹⁷

The answer does not seem to be an either-or. As mentioned above, the elder-bishop-pastor was expected to have the gift of teaching, at least those who were engaged in preaching and teaching. But the area of the elder-bishop-pastor was wider. It included rule, as we have seen, and they were to guard and to have spiritual care of the flock (Acts 20:28-30), which also included care and guidance of the individual believer (Acts 20:31; 1 Peter 5:1-3; 2 Cor. 11:28-29). When Paul specifically mentioned pastors and teachers separately it is natural to infer that teachers could be a separate office especially in charge of teaching. The gifts of "utterance of wisdom" (λόγος σοφίας) and the "utterance of knowledge" (λόγος γνώσεως) may be connected with this office.

¹⁷Abbott, p. 118.

Ruler -- As we have seen in the previous section, the rule and the administration of the church were included in the work of the elder-bishop. Also the word pastor--" ποιμήν was used in the earliest classical writers of rulers of the people. . ."¹⁸ But Jesus told His disciples to rule in a way different from secular rulers (Matt. 20:20-28). Peter said they should do it by their example (1 Peter 5:1-3). But the Bible shows us that it is necessary to have leadership in the church. In several places in the New Testament the gift of leadership is mentioned with different words. Robertson and Plummer give this explanation of these words:

κυβερνήσεις -- "governings" or "administrations." This probably refers to those who superintended the externals of the organization, οἱ προϊστάμενοι (Rom. 12:8; 1 Thess. 5:12) or οἱ ἡγουμένοι (Heb. 13:7,17,24; Acts 15:22). The word is derived from the idea of piloting a ship (Acts 27:11; Rev. 18:17), and hence easily acquires the sense of directing with skill and wisdom. . . . The term which is found nowhere else in NT, may be equivalent to ἐπισκόποι and πρεσβύτεροι. We must, however, remember that we are here dealing with gifts rather than with offices which grew out of the gifts.¹⁹

Lenski rightly says about the gift of leadership:

Α κυβερνήτης is a helmsman who steers a vessel, and thus this gift consists in managing and directing others whether officially as presbyters, pastors, or bishops or in unofficial ways. Some men and some women of the church, including even young people, have this gift to a marked degree and profit the church not a little by rightly putting it to use. "Helps" and "management" are a significant pair.²⁰

¹⁸Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁹Robertson and Plummer, p. 281.

²⁰Lenski, p. 540.

These gifts of leadership may be connected with the offices mentioned in the previous section, but they may also be given to someone else for the service of the church.

Deacon, deaconess -- Healing the sick and helping the afflicted and the poor was a part of the ministry of Jesus. The Christian church also took up this ministry from the very beginning. In both Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 some of the gifts were given specifically for this ministry. Meyer explains the gift of διακονία in Rom. 12:7 as "the gift of administration of external affairs of the church, particularly the care of the poor, the sick and strangers."²¹ In verse 8 "the acts of mercy-- ὁ ἐλεῶν ἐν ἰλαρότητι" refers to the same, but emphasizes especially the help to those who are in different needy situations; the poor, the sick, and the destitute who cannot pay for the service.

In 1 Cor. 12:28 those who have the gift for such ministry are called ἀντιλήμψεις - helpers which most commentators take to mean "succouring of those in need, whether poor, sick, widows, orphans, strangers, travellers, or what not; the work of the diaconate, both male and female."²²

In the pastoral Epistles this gift is connected with the office of the deacon and deaconess (1 Tim. 3:8-12), whose task it was to be in charge of the matters mentioned above. In Phil. 1:1 they

²¹Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, "The Epistle to the Romans," Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament (New York: Funk and Wagnall Publishers, 1884), p. 472.

²²Robertson and Plummer, p. 281.

are mentioned together with bishops, which shows that they shared an important part of the ministry.

The gifts of grace not fixed to a permanent function or a special office

The gifts of wisdom, knowledge and exhortation -- These gifts are closely connected and are therefore naturally discussed together. By "utterance of wisdom" Paul certainly was not thinking of worldly wisdom or wisdom of the natural man, which he strongly repudiated (1 Cor. 1:20; 2:1-5; 3:19; 2 Cor. 1:12). Paul must here think of the gift of a special insight into God's wisdom revealed in Christ and the gospel (1 Cor. 1:17-25,30), and the ability to expose this wisdom of God in Christ and apply it to the actual situations of people (Rom. 16:19; Eph. 5:15,17).

Of the "utterance of knowledge" Lenski has very appropriate exposition:

The distinctive feature of γνῶσις is the personal apprehension of the details of the Gospel. It, too, deals with the gospel, but there is nothing in the term that includes speculation or speculative and philosophical ideas. "Knowledge" deals with the explanation, the unfolding, and the correlation of gospel facts, or we may call them doctrines. The "expression," or λόγος, of knowledge is the ability to impart this personal knowledge to others. This gift is of great value to teachers, to apologists, and to many others in the church. Paul pairs it with the highest gift.²³

Paul mentioned the gift of exhortation, παρακλήσις, as a special gift in Rom. 12:8. A rather great proportion of Paul's letters were devoted to exhortation, how Christians were to live and act. St.

²³Lenski, p. 501.

Peter said: "I intend always to remind you of these things, though you know them and are established in the truth (2 Peter 1:12).

These gifts are important to the pastor-teacher-elder-bishop, but they are also important to the laymen in the mutual admonishing of one another (Col. 3:16).

The gifts of faith, healing and working of miracles --

Commentators usually agree that faith in 1 Cor. 12:9 (πίστις ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι) does not refer to saving faith because faith is something all true Christians possess. Meyer gives this explanation:

What is intended, therefore, must be a high degree of faith in Christ produced by the Holy Spirit, a heroism of faith, the effects of which manifest themselves in one in healings, in another in wonders, in a third in prophecy (Rom. 12:6), in a fourth in the discernment of Spirit.²⁴

Robertson and Plummer describe it as ". . . the faith which produces not only miracles, but martyrs. We are perhaps to understand the next four gifts, or at any rate the next two as grouped under πίστις ."²⁵ I find that these two statements give a sound exposition of the gift of faith in this sense, which is also in harmony with what Jesus said in Matt. 21:21-22. Some are given a special degree of this faith as a gift of grace, and this gift is related especially to the two next mentioned, healing and working miracles.

Jesus performed miraculous healings when He was on earth, and Scripture says He is the same today (Heb. 13:8). James exhorted

²⁴ Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians, in Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament, p. 282.

²⁵ Robertson and Plummer, p. 266.

Christians to call the elders to pray for the sick (James 5:14-15).

But Christ has also given some the special gift of grace for healing and performing miracles. It is a gift of grace so it should give no glory to man, but to God alone who works the miracles or healings.

Bridge and Phypers have a very appropriate statement concerning these gifts:

First, miraculous healing must always be viewed against the background of the teaching of the whole Scripture on the subjects of suffering, disease and death Clearly, however, Scripture teaches that suffering, sickness and death are parts of man's condition as the result of the fall and will pass away only when God makes His new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:4). . . . Thus, miraculous healing provides no universal panacea for dealing with sickness.²⁶

Jesus said that these signs should follow His church (Mark 16:17-18)

but did not promise that all would be healed.

These gifts are greatly misused by many false healers and have come into disrepute. But it would not be right to abandon them for that reason. But they should be used carefully, always adding if it is ". . . according to His will" (1 John 5:14). And it does not mean that we should not use the natural means of healing which medical science can provide.

The gifts of helping, serving, showing mercy and giving --

These gifts are also closely connected so it is natural to discuss them together. The three first gifts we have already mentioned in connection with the ministry of the deacons and deaconesses (Chapter II²⁷). But these gifts are not limited to the deacons and deaconesses. All

²⁶Bridge and Phypers, p. 56.

²⁷Supra, pp. 56-57.

Christians may possess and practice these gifts both in the life of the congregation and in their daily life and vocation. But some have them as special gifts both to see the need and to help and serve and show mercy. It is a very important gift, and Jesus has promised a great reward for those who faithfully practice this gift (Matt. 10:40-42).

Paul also especially mentioned the gift of contribution, ὁ μεταδίδους ἐν ἀπλότητι (Rom. 12:8). All Christians are supposed to give to the Lord's work and to people in need. (2 Cor. 9:6-10; 1 John 3:17). But some have received a special gift of giving. They may not always be among the rich (Mark 12:41-44), but they practice the word of Jesus who said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35), and have found the blessing in it and so perform an important ministry in the church.

The gift of distinguishing between spirits -- As already said in this paper the discerning of spirits, the test of teaching and preaching, is an important work of the priesthood of all believers (Chapter I²⁸). But Paul nevertheless listed the "ability to distinguish between spirits," διακρίσεις πνευμάτων, as a special gift of the Holy Spirit. Lenski makes the following appropriate statement about this gift:

All Christians are to "prove the spirits, whether they are of God," but certain difficult cases occur, for which more than common Christian discernment is necessary. False prophets love to use deceptive language. For the purpose of unmasking

²⁸Supra, pp. 20-21.

these prophets the Lord provides this gift and thus enables his church to turn from lying spirits to the one Spirit of truth.²⁹

This gift is very important in the life of the church. Paul urged the elders from Ephesus to be alert and to practice it since false prophets would appear (Acts 20:28-32). Much damage has been done to the church to the detriment of many because this gift has not been practiced. And in our day this gift is more important than ever because of all the false and unbiblical teachings which are confronting the church. Paul admonishes the Christians not to be ". . . tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles" (Eph. 4:14). As Paul says the false teachers are both "cunning" and "deceitful." Often the ordinary Christian terms are used, but given a different meaning which is not based on the Word of God. For instance, justification by faith alone may be emphasized, but it may not be a justification built on the vicarious atonement of Christ as the Scripture says. Resurrection may be said to be important, but with closer examination one may find that only an immanent change of existence may be thought of. Many other examples could be mentioned. And the examination of methods used is also important. By using a certain method in interpreting the Scriptures, as for instance the historical critical method, the truth of the Scriptures will be denied. There is, therefore, need of special discernment to reveal and reject both dangerous methods and false and deceitful teaching. Not all who themselves teach correctly are able to expose and reject false methods and false teachings. For this reason the gift of discerning the Scriptures is so

²⁹Lenski, p. 504.

important. Such gifts also need to be trained. Finally it must be emphasized that this distinguishing of the spirits must be done with Scripture as norm and standard and not a subjective evaluation.

The gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues -- It has been much discussed whether the speaking in tongues in Corinth was the same as at the day of Pentecost. In this connection it must first of all be said that the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was a one time occurrence just as the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus were one time occurrences in God's economy of salvation. But Jesus said that one of the signs which should follow his church was that "they will speak in new tongues-- γλώσσαις λαλήσουσιν καιναῖς " (Mark 16:17). Lenski seems right when he says: "As the promise is one, so the fulfillment is one regardless of place where the fulfillment occurs."³⁰

Paul talks of "varieties of tongues-- γένη γλωσσῶν " (1 Cor. 12:10,28). Γένη comes from γένος and may mean offspring, kindred, race, or kind, sort, species. Paul wrote about "pray in a tongue" (1 Cor. 14:14), and speaking in a tongue, which needed interpretation (verse 13). At Pentecost it is said they spoke in "other tongues-- ἑτέραις γλώσσαις " (Acts 2:4). People of different tongues understood what was said (Acts 2:7-13). If this was the same speaking in tongues as in Corinth there must have been a miracle of hearing, or the Spirit of God at this special time had made it understood among the people. Some commentators, however, hold that the

³⁰Ibid., p. 504.

tongues of Pentecost were different. The first argument is better founded, however. The tongues of Acts 10:46 and 19:6 seem to have been of the same kind. Robertson and Plummer give the following appropriate explanation for this gift:

The γένη indicates that the manifestations of the gift varied much, compare γένη φάων (14:10): but it seems to be clear that in all cases persons who possessed this gift spoke in ecstasy a language which was intelligible to themselves, but not to their hearers, unless some one was present who had the gift of interpretation. The soul was undergoing experiences which ordinary language could not express, but the Spirit which caused the experiences supplied also a language in which to express them.

This ecstatic language was a blissful outlet of blissful emotions, but was of no service to anyone but the speaker and those who had the gift of interpretation. The gift of interpreting these ecstatic utterances might be possessed by the person who uttered them (1 Cor. 14:5,13); but this seems to be exceptional: Compare Acts 10:46; 19:6; Mark 16:17. From 1 Cor. 14:27-28 it seems to be clear that this ecstatic utterance was not uncontrollable: It was very different from the frenzy of some heathen rites, in which the worshipper parted with both reason and power of will.³¹

The gift should not be practiced if there is no one to interpret (1 Cor. 14:28).

This gift is also misunderstood and has therefore also been misused, especially because it is connected with a second experience which often is called "baptism with the Spirit." Bridge and Phypers correctly say:

There is in fact no place in any of the Epistles where any teaching is given about a "baptism of the Spirit" distinct from the Holy Spirit's work in conversion and regeneration Baptism with the Spirit is not a second experience, therefore, but an initial experience whereby an individual becomes a true Christian (1 Cor. 12:13; 1:2).³²

³¹Robertson and Plummer, pp. 267-68.

³²Bridge and Phypers, pp. 113, 115.

Paul also expressly said that one cannot be a Christian without having the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9). Therefore all who are true Christians are baptized with the Holy Spirit. But, as Bridge and Phypers say, "Speaking with tongues, when it occurred, was significant and worthy of mention, but was by no means necessary in the earliest Christian communities as evidence that the Spirit had been given."³³ It is not meant to be a yardstick to judge who is spiritual and who is not. It is a gift of grace which the Holy Spirit gives to whom he wills to give it. Paul placed it as the last and the smallest of the gifts, and he definitely did not suppose that all would possess it (1 Cor. 12:30). But when God genuinely bestows this gift, especially for private prayer (1 Cor. 14:18-19), I do not find a Biblical basis for rejecting it, but to use it in accordance with the place Scripture gives it. This means that some dangers and misuses connected especially with this gift must be carefully avoided. First of all, speaking in tongues is not necessarily worked by the Holy Spirit. Also in non-Christian religions there is speaking in tongues. Therefore it must be genuinely given by God, and what is said must be in harmony with the Word of God. Secondly, those speaking in tongues easily consider it a mark of higher spirituality and thus division and strife among Christians are caused. This is un-Scriptural and must be rejected. Thirdly, Paul admonishes that in public meetings intelligible prophecy should be spoken (1 Cor. 14:19). If there occurs speaking in tongues it must be regulated and interpreted (1 Cor. 14:26-28). And finally it must be observed that this gift is

³³Ibid., p. 116.

not more super-natural than the other gifts of the Spirit and should have no special classification.

The Function of the Gifts of Grace

According to the Spirit and the Word of God,
in freedom but in order

The apostle Paul strongly emphasized that the gifts of grace are all given by the same Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4-11). They have different functions, but they are all given by the same Spirit. Therefore only when the work of the Holy Spirit is not hindered by sin, impenitance and disobedience can the Spirit bestow the spiritual gifts. If the believers are not open to receive the gifts the Spirit wants to bestow, or if the whole order or institution of the church have no room for them, the gifts of grace will not function properly. Freedom is necessary if the gifts of grace are to function. In this respect Hans von Campenhausen is right when he says, "In the Church freedom is a basic controlling principle, for the Spirit of Christ, which is the giver of freedom, urges men not to independence and self-assertion but to loving service."³⁴ This freedom for the Holy Spirit to work was typical of the New Testament church. As Lindsay says: "What cannot fail to strike us in this picture is the untrammelled liberty of the worship."³⁵

This does not mean that there should be freedom for everything. Talking about prophecy in Rom. 12:6 Paul says: "... if prophecy, in

³⁴Hans von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Churches of the First Three Centuries (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1967), p. 58.

³⁵Lindsay, p. 49.

proportion to our faith." I find Lenski right when he, in the interpretation of Rom. 12:6, says about this:

The claim that Paul refers to the prophet's own measure of faith is answered the moment one sees that no prophet is mentioned but only "prophecy." Now "prophecy" is objective, the content of what one may prophesy, and it is plain that the controlling norm for this cannot be something subjective, the prophet's own trust, but in the very nature of the case must also be something objective, the "faith" (or doctrine) once delivered to the saints (Jude 3). The effort to gain support for the subjective idea from the word is unsatisfactory. It means neither "portion" (v. 3) nor anything save the objective "right relation to," "true agreement with" the objective doctrine.³⁶

Prophecy and all other gifts of grace should be controlled by the sound apostolic words (2 Tim. 1:13; 1 Thess. 2:13) and by the words of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15-17), which is the content of faith. And even though Paul did not say there were too many gifts or that they were too active in Corinth, he said that everything was to be done "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). The reason he gave was that God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (1 Cor. 14:33).

The harmony of all gifts as members of one body

The apostle Paul said about Christians, "You are not your own" (1 Cor. 6:19). They "belong to Christ Jesus" (Gal. 5:24). They are members of His body. Each Christian has at least one gift of grace, possibly more, in order that he may function properly in the organism. There is an organic connection with Christ, the head of the body, but

³⁶R. C. H. Lenski, Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans (Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1945), p. 761.

also with one another. Then Christians stand in a relationship of ministry, not only to Christ, but to one another.³⁷

As there is no strife and envy among the members of the body, so there is no reason for envy and strife among the members of Christ's body. Some may have a more public ministry. Others serve less visibly. But they are all necessary, said Paul. If there is envy and strife, it is a sign that the Church has become carnal.

But Paul was realistic. The church exists in a sinful world, and sin and false teaching will creep into the church (compare 1 Cor. 5:1-2). Therefore Christ has given to the church gifts of leadership, gifts of testing the spirits, and so forth. Those to whom these gifts have been given are responsible for judging sin and false teaching, for coordinating the functions of the body's various members with their different gifts of grace.

³⁷O. Hallesby, Den Kristelige Troslaere (Kristiania: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1921), p. 501, says about this:

Men fra det øieblik, da de hver for sig er kommet i et organisk forbindelse med stammen, staar de ogsaa i organisk forbindelse med hverandre.

Hermed vil nu Skriften for det første ha uttalt, at alle de troende staar i et tjenende forhold ikke bare til Kristus, men ogsaa til hverandre innbyrdes, 1 Kor. 12:12-27; Rom. 12:5. Og det er just ved sin forskjell, ved sine forskjellige naadegaver, de skal tjene hverandre saaledes som forholdet er ogsaa mellom det naturlige legemes lemmer.

(But from the moment every one has come in an organic relationship to the stem, they also stand in an organic relationship to one another.

By this Scripture would first of all say that all the believers stand in a serving relationship not only to Christ, but to each other. 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Rom. 12:5. And it is just by their difference, by their different gifts of grace they shall serve one another such as the relationship is between the members of the natural body.)

The Purposes of the Gifts of Grace

The edification of the Saints

The picture of the church as the body of Christ where each Christian is a member has a self-evident purpose. A body is healthy and ready to perform its task when each member works according to its function. So it is with the body of Christ, the Church. The New Testament strongly emphasizes that the believers are to minister to one another. In Rom. 15:7 Paul said: " προσλαμβάνεσθε ἀλλήλους ." It is translated in various ways. It can properly be translated: "Take care of one another." There are many similar exhortations. This is done when each believer performs his function according to the gift of grace given to him. About prophecy Paul said that he who prophesies should "speak to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation" (1 Cor. 14:3). This can be said also of the other gifts.

The gifts of grace are not given to the individual for personal enjoyment, but they are given to the church (Eph. 4:7,11; 1 Cor. 14:3). God appointed the gifts in the church for the benefit of the whole body. The members are in need of one another's ministry. Bridge and Phypers correctly say, "The Bible views the church as a body with every member vital to its functioning, and with a necessary part to play for the benefit of all."³⁸

³⁸ Bridge and Phypers, p. 149.

The proclamation of the Gospel

The other purpose of the gifts of grace is the proclamation of the gospel to those who are outside the church. The great commission given to the apostles (Matt. 28:19) is given through them to the whole church. Each member of the body of Christ has the privilege and the responsibility to use his gift to fulfill the commission, to "declare the wonderful deeds" of Christ (1 Peter 2:9). To the Christians in Corinth Paul wrote: "We are ambassadors for Christ. . ." (2 Cor. 5:20).

The early church was very aware of that, as Bridge and Phypers say: "Because so many members of the early church were keen to exercise all the gifts that were available to them, that church grew and was strong."³⁹ This is always true when the spiritual gifts function properly. It is true that "one result of willingness to exercise spiritual gifts will be an awakening and mobilizing of church memberships."⁴⁰ Then the Christians will function not only within the communion of saints but will also be witnesses and letters of recommendation for Christ (2 Cor. 3:3) in their homes, neighbourhoods and vocations. As Luther said in his commentary on 1 Peter 4:9-11:

But since we are still living here, we should do for our neighbour as God has done us and give ourselves to him as God has given Himself to us.⁴¹

³⁹Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 149.

⁴¹LW, 30:67.

The Continuity of the Different Gifts

Many people in both former and recent times have held that a number of gifts were only temporary for the early church. This was held by Calvin but was still more strongly emphasized by Benjamin Warfield.⁴² It is also quite common among Lutheran theologians. About the ministry and the various gifts Henry Eyster Jacobs plainly states:

When the period of extraordinary was succeeded by that of only ordinary gifts of the Spirit, there was a merging of a number of these offices into one, that of the local pastor, teacher, preacher and chief presbyter or president of the congregation.⁴³

It is especially the so-called extraordinary gifts which should have disappeared. As Elmer E. Griesse says: "The fact that miracles disappeared after the second century detracts from their importance."⁴⁴

We must ask on what basis such statements are made. Bridge and Phypers, together with many others, say correctly about such statements: "It takes no account of the fact that the Bible nowhere states that any of the gifts have passed away."⁴⁵ And nowhere in the Bible is it said that it was only in apostolic time that signs and wonders were necessary for the authentication for the gospel proclamation (Mark 16:17). And as mentioned before, the Scriptures make no distinction between ordinary and extraordinary gifts. Paul listed the

⁴²Bridge and Phypers, p. 27.

⁴³Henry Eyster Jacobs, A Summary of the Christian Faith (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1905), pp. 420-21.

⁴⁴Elmer E. Griesse, "The New Testament Spiritual Gifts" (S.T.M. Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1944), p. 174.

⁴⁵Bridge and Phypers, p. 27.

"extraordinary" in between the "ordinary." For they are all extraordinary, being worked by the Holy Spirit.

The assertion that a number of the spiritual gifts have passed away would be a denial of the testimony of thousands that these gifts are active also today. It is true that there is much falsehood in connection with especially the "extra-ordinary" gifts. Falsehood has always accompanied truth. This is not, however, a reason for abandoning the gifts altogether. But as is said above they should be used according to the Word of God that the genuine is accepted but the false rejected.

This does not mean that the Lord bestows all the gifts everywhere. There may be times when some gifts are more needed and more richly bestowed than other times. God is sovereign also in this matter.

The Relationship of the Gifts of Grace to the Priesthood of All Believers

The gifts of grace and the royal priesthood

The gifts of grace make the universal priesthood of all believers function properly. The gifts of grace empower the royal priesthood to fulfill its calling. It is an anointment of Christ himself as Luther says:

Christians, however, must be completely holy priests and possess holy adornment; for He who ordains Christians as priests is a Person different from anyone else. He is the one High Priest Jesus Christ, of whom we shall soon hear more. The chism, anointing, and priestly ordination He bestows is quite different; it is the Holy Spirit who adorns them in glory and holiness and clothes them in His power and with His gifts. It is He who must dwell in the people who are to be priests before God.⁴⁶

By the gifts given them by the Holy Spirit the royal priesthood is empowered to perform its calling.

⁴⁶LW, 13:295.

The relationship between the gifts of grace in the royal priesthood

The royal priests all have the same authority, but they have different functions in the body of Christ, the church, according to their gifts of grace. What makes them work harmoniously together is love. The apostle Paul exhorted Christians to "earnestly desire the higher gifts" (1 Cor. 12:31). But he continued: "And I will show you a still more excellent way." And then in chapter 13 he wrote about the importance of love as the motif and harmonizing principle in all activities. In Col. 3:14 he said: "And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." When love is the motif and the guiding principle a Christian will "count others better than" himself (Phil. 2:3). Then also the universal priesthood will function properly.

The Church's Responsibility with Respect to the Gifts of Grace

Since the gifts of grace are given to the church by Christ (Eph. 4:7-11), and He has placed them there (1 Cor. 12:28), it is the responsibility of the church to recognize them, to train and call those who have the gifts to work in the various ministries and offices of the church. Many gifts are waiting to be recognized, to be trained and put to work. Some persons need special training in order to train others (2 Tim. 2:2). The purpose the apostle Paul gave for the gifts and for those men who fill the offices was "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). That is the most important task of the ministries mentioned in v. 11.

Hendrik Kraemer calls the laity "the frozen credits and dead capital"⁴⁷ of the church.

Jesus took his disciples with Him and trained them. The apostle Paul brought co-workers with him. The various gifts of grace are not ready made and complete. They need to be taught in the Word of God and to be trained practically. And the great goal of the leadership of the church should be to put every believer to work according to the gifts of grace which are bestowed on each one of the believers.

The Gifts of Grace and the Organization of the Church

Hendrik Kraemer correctly says about the church: "Her being an institution is a human necessity, but not the nature of the church."⁴⁸ In order to perform her calling, it is necessary for the church to organize. At the same time it is always a danger that the organization becomes a goal in itself. She may then quench life instead of promoting it, which is the purpose of the organization. Erik Sjögren in the article "The Church and the Cultus in the New Testament" rightly says about the churches Paul founded:

Thus, in the Pauline congregations, we find both "free" inspiration and "official" functions. But there was not the sharp difference between them suggested by these terms. Both built on the Spirit's activities in the church.⁴⁹

So in the church there is the need for organization, and there is need for permanent ministries. But the structure must give the gifts

⁴⁷Kraemer, p. 176.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 181.

⁴⁹Erik Sjögren, "The Church and the Cultus in the New Testament," This is the Church, ed., Anders Nygren (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1952), p. 83.

of grace which the Holy Spirit has given to the church room to function and must equip all members to minister. But we should always remember, as Luther says, that "the authority and the dignity of the priesthood resided in the community of believers."⁵⁰ At the same time Luther emphasized the importance of the preaching office in the church that the gospel always be proclaimed, as he stated in the following:

Inasmuch as the office of preaching the gospel is the greatest of all and certainly is apostolic, it becomes the foundation for all other functions, which are built upon it, such as the offices of teachers, prophets, governing (the church), speaking with tongues, the gifts of healing and helping, as Paul directs in 1 Cor. 12:28. Even Christ chiefly proclaimed the gospel, as the highest function of the office, and did not baptize, John 4:2. Paul too gloried in the fact that he was sent not to baptize (1 Cor. 1:17) as to a second office, but to the primary office of preaching the gospel.⁵¹

There are no contradictions in these statements by Luther. They are both necessary in the life of the church. In the following we will study more closely the gifts the risen Lord has given to the church as a permanent function or office in the church.

⁵⁰LW, 40:35.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 36.

CHAPTER III

THE MINISTRY

The Ministry of Jesus as the Model for All Ministries

In order to understand what the Christian ministry is we must first of all look at the ministry of Jesus. For as Robert S. Paul says, ". . . all ministry is derived from the messianic ministry of Jesus Christ."¹ In him are contained all the ministries given to the church. He taught in the synagogues, he preached the good news to great multitudes in open air, in the homes and to single individuals, and he healed the sick and helped the afflicted (compare Matt. 9:35-36). He said that we should pray for labourers for the great harvest (Matt. 9:37-38). He educated his disciples both by words (Matt. 10:24) and by his example (John 13:15). Jesus said about his own ministry that He had come to serve, διακονέω , not to be served (Matt. 20:28). And he explicitly told his disciples that it is different in the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. In this world the rulers bring people under them and master over them (κατακυριεύω) but the disciples were to be δούλοι --servants, ministers (Matt. 20:25-27), and the greatest was to be he who was the slave of his brethren. Eastwood rightly says about this:

Ministers are called to serve, not to rule, and it is their duty to serve in such a way that God may eventually rule the world. All Christians, ministers and laity, stand together

¹Robert S. Paul, Ministry (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 82.

as servants of God's purpose. Christ imparted no special power to any select company of His followers. As Luther says: "For Christ established in His church neither emperors nor potentates, nor despots, but ministers."²

In the new world Christ shall rule from His glorious throne, and His disciples shall rule with Him (Matt. 19:27-30). But on this earth they are δῆκονοι, servants, ministers.³

But the ministry has authority: ". . . he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν" (Matt. 10:1). And after the resurrection, when all power, πᾶσα ἐξουσία, both in heaven and on earth was given to Him (Matt. 28:18), He gave His great commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. . . ."

But this was not the authority of an external position, but it was the authority of His Word (John 6:63) and of His Spirit (Acts 1:8). It is service, but it is a noble service, as T. W. Manson says: "In the Kingdom of God, service is not a stepping-stone to nobility: it is nobility, the only kind of nobility that is recognized."⁴ And the apostles have so much authority that Jesus said: "He who hears you

²Cyril Eastwood, The Priesthood of all Believers, an Examination of the Doctrine from Reformation to the Present Day (London: Epworth Press, 1960), p. 41.

³Arnold Bittlinger, Charisma und Amt (Stuttgart: Calver Verlag, 1967), p. 18. Talking about δῆκονοι he says: "Es wälzt damit einen Begriff, der in der Umwelt des Neuen Testaments nirgends eine besondere Würde-oder Machstellung bezeichnet."

⁴T. W. Manson, The Church's Ministry (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1948), p. 27.

hears me, and he who rejects you, rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (Luke 10:16).

The Apostolate and the Ministry

At Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came, the apostles received power as Jesus promised and their ministry of the gospel started. And the effect was great. And it did not stop in Jerusalem. Acts tells how the gospel was spread in an ever wider area. Naturally it was the apostles who were the preachers and leaders. But the sphere of the apostles was limited, and their time came to an end. How was the responsibility transferred to others? What is the relationship of the apostolate and the further ministry of the gospel: This is a much discussed question, and there are a variety of answers to it.

Walter Schmithals says that "nowhere does Paul indicate even the slightest connection between the apostolate and the historical Jesus."⁵ This is a denial of the Biblical texts. Passages like Acts 7:58 and 8:1-3 indicate that Paul was in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost and that he knew the relationship between the twelve apostles and Jesus (compare 1 Cor. 15:5-6; Gal. 1:18-19; Acts 9:27; Acts 15:1-2).

The viewpoint at the other extreme is that there is a direct connection between the apostolate and the pastoral ministry, the episcopate, as the following statement shows:

Since the ministry acts in the person of Christ, it needs for the legitimation of its claims and activity the due insertion

⁵Walter Schmithals, The Office of Apostle in the Early Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), p. 30.

of each of the office-holders into the historical sequence of those who were installed by Christ himself at the beginning of the chain.⁶

This is called the apostolic succession. The apostle Peter, to whom the "keys" (Matt. 16:18-19) were given, transferred them to his follower, and the pope is the direct successor. The apostolic succession is claimed also by the Greek Catholic Church and by some protestants, for example the Anglican Church, where especially the high church party considers it an integral part of the church. John Line says, "Christ, Church, Sacraments and Ministry are one unity, and one divine-human structure of being. . . ."⁷ But not all Anglicans agree with that. Michael Green who belongs to the evangelical stream of the Church of England says:

This doctrine of apostolic succession in the third sense defined above (p. 63) cannot be so proved (from Scripture), and therefore we would expect to find nothing in the formularies of the Church of England to require its acceptance. That is precisely what we do find. Succession is not included in the marks of the church (Art. XIX) and is not mentioned in XXIII which deals with the ministering in the congregation.⁸

Others, even if they do not necessarily hold to the apostolic succession, affirm that there is a direct connection between the apostolate and the pastoral (episcopal) ministry. They mean to find a basis for this in the late Jewish institution of the שָׁלִיחַ (shaliah). The word does not occur in the Old Testament, but the

⁶Ernst Niermann, "Priest," Sacramentum Mundi, An Encyclopedia of Theology, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 5:99.

⁷John Line, The Doctrine of the Christian Ministry (London: Lutterworth Press, 1959), p. 21.

⁸Michael Green, Called to Serve, Ministry and Ministries in the Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 70.

verb נִלְשָׁ is found there. נִלְשָׁ is used from the beginning of the rabbinical period and it became a legal institution in later Judaism at the beginning of the Christian era. It was a legal institution, and the נִלְשָׁ could represent an individual or an organization and act on their behalf with the same authority as the person or the institution he represents. As the Mishna Berakot says: "The Ambassador (נִלְשָׁ) of a man is like the man himself."⁹ In the Syrian translation of the New Testament ἀπόστολος is translated נִלְשָׁ , which Rengstorff takes as a proof that the New Testament ἀπόστολος is equivalent to $\text{נִלְשָׁ}/\text{נִלְשָׁ}$.¹⁰ Rengstorff also says, "the basis for the New Testament apostolate in its totality of its phenomena is the rabbinic statement that the apostle of a man is like the man himself."¹¹ The apostolate is representation of Jesus. The apostles were authorized by Christ for the proclamation of the gospel. Rengstorff does not find it necessary to have long discussion of whether it is scientifically permissible to speak of apostles in the same sense as those whom Christ chose as apostles in his life-time.¹² For Rengstorff says,

If it is the office of Christ to bear witness to God's will, to proclaim the coming of His kingdom, and to bring it about, the task of His apostle can only consist in doing the same and in subordinating everything to this goal of Christ.¹³

⁹Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, Apostolate and Ministry, The New Testament Doctrine of the Office of the Ministry (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 26.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 29.

¹¹Ibid., p. 30.

¹²Ibid., p. 31.

¹³Ibid., p. 32.

In this sense the apostolate of the apostles authorized by Jesus for this purpose continues and is transferred to the pastoral (and episcopal) ministry today. About this Rengstorf says:

In the bearer of the ecclesiastical office Jesus Christ today provides Himself with a representative among men in the same manner as He did in the apostle at the beginning of the church. He also fits him out for service with the same authority that He possessed and which he conferred on His apostles.¹⁴

There are, however, many scholars who disagree with Rengstorf's theory of the ἀπόστολος -- $\pi\alpha\sigma\chi\iota$ -- pastoral ministry. The one who has furnished the strongest arguments against Rengstorf's theory is T. W. Manson. He studied the meaning and usage of $\pi\alpha\sigma\chi\iota$ in late Judaism and came to this conclusion:

What emerges from the consideration of the Jewish evidence regarding the shaliah? First, that he performs on behalf of someone else, whether an individual or a corporal body, functions which his principal is himself entitled to perform. Second, that the nature of his activities, and in some cases their duration, is defined; so that his authority does not go beyond the terms of his commission. Third, that his commission is not transferrable. When he ceases to exercise it, the authority reverts to the principal. Fourth, that shaliah is not a term of status but of function. Fifth, that in so far as the shaliah has a religious commission it is always exercised within the borders of Jewry, and does not involve what we should call missionary activity.¹⁵

These arguments are so decisive that the basis for Rengstorf's theory crumbles. Also most scholars count Manson's arguments decisive. Especially the fact that the authority of the shaliah was not transferrable and that missionary activity was not included are the most weighty. For the very task of the apostles was just missionary activity, the proclamation of the gospel.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁵Manson, pp. 43-44.

Concerning the relationship between the apostolate and the pastoral-episcopal ministry, J. K. S. Reid says:

There are not discernible steps recorded in Scripture by means of which the apostolate passes over to become the episcopate, or in other words the apostles hand over to their successors an identical or even a closely corresponding office.¹⁶

This holds true both for the apostolic succession and for Rengstorf's theory. There is no direct continuation of the apostolate in the narrow sense of that word (compare Chapter II¹⁷). It is significant, as Manson says, that the Acts records that Judas was replaced. But when James was martyred, no one was appointed to replace him. Only the apostasy of Judas caused replacement.¹⁸ I find Manson right when he says:

The importance of this is that it indicates that in so far as the Twelve had a special status conferred upon them by Christ, it was a personal thing and inalienable. It would be forfeited by misconduct; but it could not be transmitted to another. It did not pass at death.¹⁹

J. K. S. Reid says it this way: "Just as a 'chapter closes' when the books composing the New Testament are written and canonized, so too an office comes to an end."²⁰

In a wider sense, however, there is both a connection and a continuity between the apostolic ministry and the later ministry of the gospel. And there must be such a relationship in a true church.

Robert S. Paul says, ". . . we would maintain that in the Biblical view

¹⁶J. K. S. Reid, The Biblical Doctrine of the Ministry (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1955), p. 37.

¹⁷Supra, pp. 49-51.

¹⁸Manson, p. 51.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 51.

²⁰Reid, p. 46.

of the Church the succession of the true Ministry cannot be essentially different from the succession of faith in the church."²¹ The prophetic and apostolic word has been the foundation and the norm for the church and its ministry ever since (Eph. 2:20). Reid writes:

They [the apostles] can of course and do have successors; but they are successors not in the primary sense: the original witness had been made and no one can or need to do it over again The continuing ministry belongs to the Church as such, and so far as apostolicity is concerned there is parity, for we are successors of the apostles and none of us exactly rank with them or reduplicate their office.²²

In the following section we will try to discover what the New Testament says about this continuing ministry of the gospel.

Evidences of the Gospel Ministry in the New Testament

The Jerusalem Church

In the period following the founding of the Christian church at Pentecost, the apostles were in charge of the ministry of the gospel, the leadership of the church and practical matters like the care of the sick and needy. But it was not long before they found it necessary to share the functions. In Acts 6:1-6 we are told that the apostles asked the congregation to elect seven men to take care of the needy and to serve at the table. There is disagreement among scholars about what office they held. Some hold that this ministry was most close to that of the presbyter (elder) since Stephen and Philip also later preached. Others think that their ministry was the beginning of the diaconate. They were elected to serve at table, for example, to take care of the

²¹Paul, p. 84.

²²Reid, pp. 46-47.

practical matters of the church, the finances and also the care for the poor and needy. It is natural to conclude that it is the beginning of the diaconate. This became the main ministry of the deacons and deaconesses. The fact that Stephen and Philip also received and practiced the grace for preaching does not refute the fact that the ministry to which they were elected was mainly a practical one. But it shows that the diaconate was a spiritual office, a part of the gospel ministry which had spiritual requirements. It also shows that more emphasis was laid on exercising the gifts of grace they had received than on staying within their limits. It also shows that in the church in Jerusalem there were order and organization, but also spiritual freedom for the spiritual gifts to function.

In Acts 15 the scene had become somewhat changed. We do not know how many of the apostles were still in Jerusalem. It is usually held that some of them left Jerusalem during the persecution (Acts 8:1-4). Some of the apostles, among them Peter, were still there, and in addition there were now elders who had an important role in leadership and also in responsibility for determining the correct doctrine (Acts 15:2,6). James, the Lord's brother, had become one of the important leaders of the congregation. From what is mentioned above we may infer that in the Jerusalem church there were apostles, elders and deacons who were in charge of leadership, preaching and serving. At the same time there was freedom for the spiritual gifts to function.

Pauline teaching and practice of the various ministries

The church which sent Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey gives evidence of having been an organized church. There were prophets (preachers) and teachers. According to the guidance of the Holy Spirit they sent two of their best men into missionary work (Acts 13:1-3). This suggests that there also must have been offices of leadership, in addition to teaching and preaching, or included in them.

Acts 14:23 tells that the apostle Paul already on the return from his first missionary journey (A.D. 46 or 47) appointed (or caused to be elected-- χειροτονήσαντες) elders in every church. Liberal scholars reject the account in Acts and hold that it has nothing to do with Paul's ministry. Hans von Campenhausen says: "Just as Paul and the sources dependent upon him know nothing of elders, so conversely Acts, 1 Peter, James and Revelation mention only elders but neither bishops nor deacons."²³ We believe, however, that Luke provided a reliable account, and therefore we must reject von Campenhausen's hypothesis.

In his earlier letters Paul did not explicitly mention elders. But from what he wrote we understand that there must have been persons in charge of preaching and teaching and leadership in addition to the various other spiritual gifts. Already in his first letter, the letter to the Thessalonians, he admonished them to respect those who laboured among them and admonished them to esteem them highly because of their work (1 Thess. 5:12-13). It is natural to infer that Paul was here

²³Hans von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Churches of the First Three Centuries (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1967), p. 78.

thinking of those who were teaching and preaching and had pastoral care and of those in leadership.

In the letter to the Romans Paul discussed the gifts of prophecy, teaching, different kind of services and deeds of mercy. It is natural to think that some of the gifts mentioned are permanent functions and offices. This is still more evident in the letters to the Corinthians where he said that God has appointed in the church apostles, prophets, teachers, helpers, administrators, and so forth (1 Cor. 12:28). In spite of a high degree of freedom for the different gifts of the Spirit to function, there must have been persons in charge of teaching, preaching and administration. They also executed church discipline (even if they were too lax, 1 Cor. 5:1-8; 2 Cor. 2:6-8). Thomas Lindsay says correctly:

Everywhere service and leadership go together. These two thoughts are continually associated with the third, that of "gift"; for the qualifications which fit a man for service and therefore for rule within the Church of Christ are always looked upon as special "gifts" of the Spirit of God, or charismata.²⁴

In the letter to the Ephesians Paul mentioned only gifts of grace which seem to be connected with permanent functions and offices. In Acts 20:17-37 they are named elders or bishops whom the Holy Spirit had made overseers to care for the church of God (Acts 20:28). Paul addressed the letter to the Phillippians to the bishops and deacons of the church (Phil. 1:1).

Thomas Lindsay says: "There is no trace of the idea that churches had to be organized from above in virtue of power conferred

²⁴Thomas Lindsay, The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries (New York: George H. Doran Company, n.d.), p. 63.

by our Lord officially and specially upon certain of their members."²⁵

But Lindsay continues:

. . . the Christians of Corinth and of other cities in the East and in the West were sufficiently acquainted with forms of social organization to be able to organize communities in such a way that the possibilities of rule and service which lay in possession of those gifts of the Spirit that manifested the presence of Christ, could find free exercise for the benefit and edification of the whole community.²⁶

In the pastoral letters the apostle Paul made no mention of the free gifts, only those connected with fixed offices, elders, teaching and ruling elders according to 1 Tim. 4:17, and deacons and deaconesses (1 Tim. 3:8-13). But I think Lindsay is right when he says that ". . . these pastoral Epistles are to be regarded as complementary to the earlier Epistles of St. Paul. . . ." ²⁷

When we look on Paul's letters as a whole with what is reported in the Acts, we get a picture of the Pauline congregations. We do not get the impression of any uniformity, but Paul had certain principles he followed in his guidance of the congregations. First of all he was concerned that the gifts of grace which the Holy Spirit had given to the church be recognized and given a ministry according to the gift. Some of these were to have a permanent function or office. They may be called apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers who also are called elders, teaching and ruling elders, and bishops. The gifts of the *διακονία*, showing mercy, helping, seem to have been connected with the diaconate, the ministry of the deacons and deaconesses.

²⁵Ibid., p. 121.

²⁶Ibid., p. 132.

²⁷Ibid., p. 148.

Nowhere do we find that one man had the responsibility for a congregation. There were several offices and functions in the congregation, together with the many other spiritual gifts which had been bestowed upon the church. These gifts were sometimes connected with an office-holder, or another Christian may have had them and used them to the edification of the body, the church. There was cooperation between the permanent offices or functions and the free gifts. Some of the offices seem to have been connected with the local congregation, such as pastor-teacher-elder-bishop, deacon and deaconess. Others like apostles, prophets, evangelists seem to have ministered in a larger area.

The other Epistles' teaching about ministries

Peter called Jesus the "Bishop of our souls" (1 Peter 2:25). And he wrote about elders and how they should serve (1 Peter 5:1-4). But he also said that each Christian had at least one gift of grace according to which he should serve (1 Peter 4:10-11).

James wrote about elders in the churches (James 5:14). But he also emphasized that all Christians were to be "doers of the word and not hearers only" (James 1:22).

The letter to the Hebrews exhorts Christians to "obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls . . ." (Heb. 13:17).

As a conclusion we can say that for performing the ministry of the gospel the Holy Spirit has given many different gifts to the church, some of them joined to a permanent office or function, some not. All are necessary for the proper function of the body, the church. The

permanent offices are not given for making up an organization, but for performing a function in the body, the church, so that she may fulfill her mission. To fill the offices and perform their function they should be called by the community of believers.

The Post-Apostolic Development of the Ministry

In the post-apostolic time we see a gradual strengthening of the offices, and also a gradual development of the episcopacy. But it was not a sudden change. Thomas Lindsay says:

The bishop has emerged from the circle of presbyters, but he is not their president; and while he is the leader of the congregation in many respects he is, in one respect at least, like the members of the congregation, amenable to the discipline of the elders.²⁸

We can see several reasons for this development. Already in the New Testament there were false teachers and false teachings and Paul said that they would increase (Acts 20:29). That certainly came true. In addition to heretics, worldliness and materialism crept into the church, and so it was necessary to use church discipline. A strong leadership was necessary to guard the gospel. Strong leadership was also necessary because the church encountered persecution. It was important to demonstrate the unity of the church which is in Christ, but ". . . Ignatius sees this Divine and invisible unity manifest in the bishop. . ."²⁹ Lindsay's evaluation is right:

There is no indication that he is upholding the episcopal against any other form of Church government, as for instance

²⁸ Ibid., p. 185.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 192.

the presbyterial. . . . The alternative which he contemplates is lawless isolation and self-will.³⁰

An evidence of this we find in Tertullian. Von Campenhausen says:

Even before this time [he entered Montanism] Tertullian knew nothing of a sacral priestly office, holy in itself. For, office is an institution, indispensable indeed to the order and dignity of the church, and therefore to be respected by the laity; but the mediation of salvation is not essentially bound up with the office. Moreover, the laity too are priests, and can if need be exercise all priestly functions such as baptism or the administration of the Eucharist, by themselves. Even the teaching office is not a priori a clerical preserve, nor is it subject to episcopal supervision, but only to the rule of faith.³¹

But the development continued. Lindsay says:

During the third century, it may be said during the middle third of that century, there are clear traces of a general change . . . commonly spoken of as the change of the ministry into a mediating priesthood, standing between the people and God.³²

This trend was gradually changing the nature of the church. This changing process was about completed with Cyprian. The clergy became a special estate standing between God and the believers with the power to forgive or retain sins and to perform the Eucharist, which was regarded as a unique propitiatory sacrifice. Richard Caemmerer says, "the people were saved and made Christians only as they accepted the formulas of belief laid down by the bishops and submitted to the administration of the clergy."³³ The duties of the laity became hearing and obeying. This development was further strengthened in the Middle

³⁰Ibid., p. 194.

³¹Von Campenhausen, p. 228.

³²Lindsay, p. 265.

³³Richard R. Caemmerer, "The Universal Priesthood and The Pastor," Concordia Theological Monthly, 19 (August 1948):568.

Ages, and as Ernst Niermann, writing on "Priest" in Sacramentum Mundi says about this period:

The accent was shifted to one single function, even though the highest of priestly functions, that of offering the eucharistic sacrifice. The priesthood was then defined as potestas in corpus eucharisticum The office of bishop, the potestas in corpus mysticum, was primarily regarded as the power to govern.³⁴

And this priesthood became "a separate ecclesiastical estate,"³⁵ different from the believers "in essence and not only in degree."³⁶ This development had changed the very nature of the church. Caemmerer correctly says that "The result . . . was disastrous, for the Word was almost lost sight of as the power of the Spirit, and the Sacrament was turned into an agency of clerical prestige."³⁷

On this background we understand how important the Reformation was and how radical Luther's teaching on the priesthood of all believers and the ministry must have seemed. Luther did not intend to abolish the pastoral ministry, but he gave it a different basis and a different content. This can be seen from the following quote:

Scripture makes all of us equal priests, as has been said, but the churchly priesthood which we now separate from laymen in the whole world, and which we alone call priesthood,

³⁴Niermann, p. 99.

³⁵Klaus Morsdorf, "Clergy," Sacramentum Mundi, An Encyclopedia of Theology (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 1:375.

³⁶Niermann, p. 101.

³⁷Caemmerer, p. 568.

is called ministry (miniterium), "servitude," dispensation, episcopate and presbytery in Scripture.³⁸

Again the Word of God became the center in the church and in preaching.

The Question Whether a Specific Church Order and Ministry
Can Be Deduced from the New Testament

As has been discussed above, there certainly are important principles in the New Testament for the life and the function of the church. Nevertheless it is difficult to point out a specific church order or organization in the New Testament. Attempts have been made with widely differing results. Writing about the Anglican Church, Alexander Richard Eager says:

I have tried in this little book, to set forth the Scriptural facts of the triple ministry, as held in the Church of England, from the point of view of that branch of the Catholic Church, as simple as possible.³⁹

His arguments, however, are not convincing. Others have tried to organize "New Testament churches" with quite different results. It seems right to admit that it is difficult to deduce a specific church order from the New Testament, but as the Reformation has shown us, and as I have tried to present in the paper, there are Biblical principles for the life and function of the church which can be found in the New Testament and are very important for the life and the mission of the church.

³⁸Martin Luther, Luther's Works, vol. 39: Church and Ministry, ed. Eric W. Gritsch, gen. ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 154. Hereafter this reference will be cited as LW, 39.

³⁹Alexander Richard Eager, The Christian Ministry in the New Testament (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1894), p. 5.

Ministries the Church is Called to Fulfill

The apostle Paul says that Christ "gave us the ministry of reconciliation-- δόντος ἡμῖν τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς

" (2 Cor. 5:18). He has called his church to continue until he returns (Matt. 24:14). It was correctly stated at the 1953 Convention of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod that:

. . . there is no prescribed form of the public ministry in the church. That is to say, God has commissioned His church to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments; but He has not prescribed the form of the ministry⁴⁰

And yet the ministries Christ appointed in His church according to 1 Cor. 12:28 and the gifts he gave to His church according to Eph. 4:11 are not only for the congregations at Corinth and Ephesus. They are ministries that naturally should be found through all times.

Therefore from Holy Scriptures we may present the following ministries which the church is called to fulfill.

The apostolic ministry

In accordance with what was said above, the word apostle was used in a narrow sense about the twelve plus Paul, and in a wider sense about those who were engaged in spreading the gospel and founding churches among the heathen. The great commission, given to the apostles by the risen Lord, to make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them (Matt. 28:18-19), was not completed by the twelve. The continuation of this ministry may rightly be called an apostolic ministry. Thomas Lindsay says the following about the ministry of the apostle:

⁴⁰Arnold C. Mueller, The Ministry of the Lutheran Teacher (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 13.

These two uses of the term of the apostle, the wider and the narrower, continued beyond the apostolic age. We can see this in the Didache, which carries the reference to the narrower circle in its title, while in its discription of the wandering "apostles" it paints the itinerant missionaries to whom the term belonged in its widest extent.⁴¹

In the wider sense most scholars take the word apostle in this sense.

T. W. Manson says it in this way:

The apostolate, like any other ministry in the church, is an organ developed in the Body of Christ for the performance of a specific function, the missionary work of the Church; what the commission of the Eleven is called "making disciples," what Paul calls "preaching the Gospel."⁴²

As long as there are people in the world who have not heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, it is the call of the church to do as the church in Antioch did, to send missionaries for performing this apostolic ministry given to her by Christ. Since two-thirds of the world's population are non-Christians, and most of these do not have a gospel witness, this ministry is far from being accomplished.

The pastoral ministry (including elders-bishops)

The apostle Paul in his missionary practice of preaching the gospel and establishing churches very early appointed, or had elected, people to preach and teach and to have spiritual care for the congregation. At the end of his first missionary journey he appointed (had elected) elders in every congregation (Acts 14:23). And after a little more than two years of preaching and teaching in Ephesus there were several elders (Acts 20:17,28), and other different gifts were

⁴¹Lindsay, p. 85.

⁴²Manson, p. 54.

functioning (Eph. 4:11). In 1 Tim. 3:1-7 he gave more advice about qualifications, natural and spiritual, for elders, including pastors.

The ministry of the pastor-elder-bishop was in the local congregation. This ministry of the nurturing and guidance of the believers was an important ministry, and is so today. We will discuss this ministry closer later in this paper.

The teaching ministry

There are many who take teachers and pastors as signifying the same persons (Eph. 4:11). And it is true that part of the ministry of the pastor-elder was to teach (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17). And yet Paul mentioned both in Eph. 4:11. When they are mentioned separately, it must be done with a purpose. The reason seems obvious. They may be the same person, but they may also be different. There may be persons who have the gift of teaching, but not necessarily that of shepherding the flock. The opposite might be true. So the pastor and the teacher may each fill his part of the ministry.

In our situation today there is definitely the need for the separate ministry of teaching. The range of the teacher is very wide. There are those who teach in the different church schools, especially children and youth. This is a very important ministry. And there are teachers who teach those who are going into the different ministries, such as theological seminaries, Bible schools, colleges, and so forth, which are very important ministries in the church. Most of the deviation from the true teaching starts in seminaries. Therefore to teach those who are going to minister in different capacities, especially as pastors, in such a way that they will be solidly founded on the Word of God, is essential to the whole gospel ministry.

The teaching ministry is an important part of the gospel ministry, and yet it is a ministry with its own characteristics.

The evangelistic ministry

Not only are evangelists mentioned in Eph. 4:11, but both Philip (Acts 21:8) and Timothy (2 Tim. 4:5) are called evangelists. The word evangelist-- εὐαγγελιστής --literally means one who preaches the gospel. And thinking of the ministry of Philip it is natural to infer that it is a preaching of the gospel to those who have not heard, or know little about the gospel. The evangelists seem to have had their ministry within the framework of an existing church, often in a wider area than a local congregation. Philip worked out of the church in Jerusalem, and Timothy out of the Pauline churches.

Donald Bridge and David Phypers, having stated that the purpose of the evangelist was to bring people to Christ, say:

This is the work of the Holy Spirit who operates through the words of the evangelist bringing conviction, repentance, faith and regeneration in the heart of the hearer. Because the church is commanded to preach the gospel to every creature, evangelists will always be necessary if the Great Commission is to be fully obeyed.⁴³

In the area of most churches there will be people who are not Christians. Therefore the evangelistic ministry is an important ministry in the church.

The prophetic ministry

Is this ministry of the prophet still needed in the church? We know that in the early church the prophet had an important ministry. Prophecy came into disrepute, however, because it was misused and was

⁴³Donald Bridge and David Phypers, Spiritual Gifts and the Church (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), p. 45.

used apart from Scriptural authority. But should it therefore be abandoned? The apostle Paul estimated prophecy highly. And as we have seen, prophecy is not mainly telling something about the future. Paul said that prophecy is speaking "to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation" (1 Cor. 14:3).

In the Old Testament, even if they had a priesthood which was to teach the people, there was need for prophets. It was always a tendency in Israel that their religion became an external form, a ritual only, which they performed according to the prescriptions, but with an attitude of heart of which the Lord said: "This people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me. . ." (Is. 29:13). And so the Lord had no delight in their feasts and offerings and did not accept them. Their songs were a noise to the Lord (Amos 5:21-24). So the Lord sent the prophets to them to preach the Word of God to them in their situation and to call the people to repentance and renewal of heart.

Also in the New Testament church there has always been and still is a danger that being a Christian may become an outward adherence to the Christian religion, and worship may be characterized as Isaiah and Jesus did (Is. 29:13 and Matt. 15:8), without repentance and true faith and renewal of the heart. Therefore the prophetic call to repentance, true faith and the daily renewal of the heart is always necessary in the church.

Different explanations are given to prophets and prophecy. Meyer says that prophecy is a speech which comes by the impulse and revelation of the Holy Spirit and ". . . unveils the depth of human heart (1 Cor. 14:25) and of the divine counsel (Eph. 3:5) and thereby work with

peculiar power for the enlightenment, admonition, comforting of the faithful (1 Cor. 14:3) so as to win the unbelieving (1 Cor. 14:24)."⁴⁴

Bridge and Phypers give this explanation of what they understand by prophets:

We would argue, therefore, that the prophet is someone who publicly proclaims God's Word to the assembled congregation within the framework of the biblical revelation. In other words he is the expository preacher of Scripture, whether for the strengthening and upbuilding of Christians in a devotional context or for the conversion of unbelievers in an evangelistic setting.⁴⁵

In the meaning of the two quotes above prophets are always necessary in the church. And from the history of the church we may think of many such prophets. Because the word prophet is apt to create misunderstanding we may call them with other names, but the prophetic gift needs to be in function in the church. As was also usual in the early church the prophets had a wider area than that of a local congregation. And prophets too must always be under the control of the fellow Christians on the basis of the Word of God (1 Cor. 14:29-33).

The ministry of the deaconate

For Jesus the ministry of teaching and preaching always went hand in hand with that of healing and helping the afflicted (Matt. 9:35-38). The early church also took that as part of their ministry (Acts 6:1-3). But they soon found that a division of service was necessary, not because it did not belong to the gospel ministry, but for practical reasons, because the preaching of the Word was not to be hindered.

⁴⁴Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians in Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament (New York: Funk and Wagnall Publishers, 1884), p. 282.

⁴⁵Bridge and Phypers, p. 42.

The early church followed up this. It is a distortion when the deaconate becomes a lower grade prior to becoming a minister or priest. The deacons were those who took care of the practical affairs of the church, and especially the care for the sick, poor and needy. The New Testament shows that there were both men and women serving in the deaconate (1 Tim. 3:8:13; Rom. 16:1). As the deaconate, too, is a part of the gospel ministry, material and physical care was connected with a spiritual care for the people.

Also today the ministry of the deaconate is an important ministry and should not be neglected. It is a concrete way of showing that Christ cares for those who are in need.

The Work of the Pastoral Ministry (including Elders and Bishops)

In the following paragraphs I would like to discuss the pastoral ministry more specifically. In this I also include that of the elders and bishops, since Scripture uses these terms alternately for the same persons. Some churches have a number of "lay" elders in addition to the pastor, but in principle they all engage in the same ministry in teaching and preaching and spiritual care of the congregation. There may be a division between preaching and ruling elders as 1 Tim. 5:17 indicates. In churches where the word bishop is used, it should, according to Scriptural usage, refer to the same work as that of the elder and pastor.

In this paper the phrase "pastoral ministry" is used instead of "holy ministry" in order to avoid the misunderstanding that the pastor belongs to a more holy ministry than others or that pastors belong to a special estate of a higher quality than the ordinary believers or other ministries. Arnold Mueller says that "the pastorate is neither more

divine nor less divine than all other branches of the one ministry Christ has instituted."⁴⁶

In the New Testament churches there were several elders (bishops or pastors) in each congregation, and there was a plurality of ministries (compare Eph. 4:11; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5; Acts 20:17-28).

What was then the work of the pastor-elder-bishop? At least the following can be said to have been within their ministry.

Preaching and teaching the Word of God and
administering the sacraments

Our Lord's work was primarily teaching and preaching. The resurrected Lord said to his disciples that they should "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). And "faith comes from what is heard," wrote Paul. Therefore "how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?" (Rom. 10:14-17). Therefore also Paul said "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). And he wrote to his co-worker Timothy that the message he had heard from him he should "entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). To be "apt to teach" was one of the qualifications of the bishop (1 Tim. 3:2). In "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church" Luther said that: "The duty of a priest is to preach, and if he does not preach he is as much a priest as a picture of a man is a man."⁴⁷ Luther saw preaching the most important task of the pastoral ministry, which he makes very clear when he said:

⁴⁶Mueller, p. 14.

⁴⁷Martin Luther, Three Treatises, from the American Edition of Luther's Works (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 247.

Therefore, whoever has the office of preaching imposed on him has the highest office of Christendom imposed on him. Afterwards he may also baptize, celebrate mass, and exercise all pastoral care; or, if he does not wish to do so, he may confine himself to the preaching and leave baptizing and other lower offices to others--as Christ and the apostles did, Acts 6:4 (John 4:2; 1 Cor. 1:17).⁴⁸

This does not mean that Luther had little esteem for the sacraments, but he saw preaching as the most fundamental work in the church. The sacraments were secondary compared to preaching, and they were easier to perform than preaching.

Nevertheless the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments belong together. Jesus said that the apostles were to preach (Mark 16:15) and baptize (Matt. 28:19) and celebrate the Lord's supper in remembrance of Him (Luke 22:19). In the epistles it is not said who should be in charge of baptism and the Lord's supper, but it is natural to assume that those who were in charge of the preaching were in charge also of baptism and the celebration of the Lord's supper, or that they, as Paul said and Luther repeated, when the situation required it, could have the congregation appoint and call some one(s) to cooperate with him in performing it.

Spiritual care of the congregation

Jesus charged Peter to care for the flock (John 21:15-18). Peter asked the same from his fellow-elders (1 Peter 5:1-4). Paul cared for every one in the congregation (Acts 20:31), and he admonished the elders to do the same (Acts 20:28), as he himself had done and left them an example (Acts 20:26-27,31). The apostle Paul's pastoral attitude is shown also in 2 Cor. 11:28-29. The spiritual welfare of the congregations

⁴⁸ LW, 39:314.

lay heavily on his heart. The weak needed special care. So the spiritual care and counseling are important parts of the pastor's ministry. Here also our great Saviour and Lord left us an example in the way he cared both for the multitudes and for the individual.

Equipping the saints for the ministry

After Paul mentioned the gifts (Eph. 4:11) which seem to have a permanent function in the church, he gave as the purpose for these ministries "to equip the saints for the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ. . . ." verse 12. In the local congregation this responsibility falls first and foremost on the pastor and the teachers (including elders-bishops). It is not the intention that the special offices shall have the whole responsibility of the upbuilding of the church and the witness of the gospel. The first responsibility Paul says is that they shall equip the saints so that they could be partakers of the ministry both within the fellowship of believers and in their witness to the world. As Michael Green says it:

We tend to assume, today, that the purpose of the ministry is primarily to do with the leading of public worship and the celebration of the sacraments. These functions are never once attributed to the ministry in the New Testament. The ministry there is concerned first and foremost with the didache, the teaching of Christians, so that they may the more effectively play their part in the world.⁴⁹

In order for the believers to fulfill their ministry they need to be deeply rooted in the truth of the Word of God and to attain "mature manhood" and "grow up to him who is the head, into Christ . . ." (Eph. 4: 13-16). They are to be steadfast and not be "tossed to and fro and

⁴⁹Green, p. 23.

carried about with every wind of doctrine," but to know what the Lord's will is (Eph. 5:15-20) and to perform it in an evil world. Thus equipped, the believers will become co-workers with the pastor (teacher-elder-bishop) and thus the whole ministry will be both strengthened and widened and made more effective.

Guarding against false teaching

We have mentioned that the pastor's work is to preach and teach. He is to preach and teach the Word of God under the guidance and the power of the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the ". . . whole counsel of God . . ." (Acts 20:27), all that the Lord has commanded us (Matt. 28:20). But he is also charged to guard alertly against false teaching (Acts 20:28-32). Paul was himself engaged also in this part of the ministry. The letter to the Galatians shows how zealous he was for true teaching of the gospel. He saw that after him even worse wolves would come among the believers. Therefore this caution was all the more important (Acts 20:29-31).

All the Christians are called to "discern the spirits," as we have seen, and for this they need to be equipped (Eph. 4:12-16). But those who are in the preaching and teaching positions have the greatest responsibility, and will be judged with greater strictness (James 3:1).

Giving leadership to the church

We saw when we discussed the different gifts of grace that leadership is included in the work of the elder-bishop and pastor. A shepherd was in those days one who went in front of the flock and led it and guided it in that way. Of the elders it is said that they were προϊστάμενοι --set over, preside, govern, superintend, their own

house. As presbyters-elders they were to do so in the church of God also (1 Tim. 3:4-5). In 1 Cor. 12:28 Paul wrote that God had appointed κυβερνήσεις --administrators--in the church. In the first church there seems to have been a division of tasks. Some were teaching elders and some were ruling elders (1 Tim. 5:17). A good preacher and teacher may not be a good administrator or leader and ruler. And there may be some in the church who are not elders but who have the gift of administration and rule. In the New Testament we see nowhere that there is a one man rule in a congregation. But in the spiritual matters of the church the pastor and elders (bishop) will be in position of guidance and leadership. But about this leadership it can be said with G. W. Bromiley:

The pastoral rule is not of a political, judicial rule, but a positive one of edification and guidance of Christians, both as a body and as individuals, in order that they may be better disciples and therefore better fulfill the common ministry of witness to Jesus Christ . . . sometimes rebuke and discipline. . .⁵⁰

As water rises only to its own level, so it is said that a pastor can guide the believers only to his own spiritual level. True spiritual leadership is important for the life of the church.

The Qualifications for the Pastoral Ministry

The gift for the ministry

We have seen that one of the gifts Christ has given to the church is that of the pastor (Eph. 4:11). Not everyone should be called to the ministry of the pastor, but only those on whom the Lord has bestowed the gift to carry out this ministry. Luther had an important word to say also concerning this:

⁵⁰G. W. Bromiley, Christian Ministry (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), p. 75.

For it is not enough to be learned and intelligent, but the gift of grace to teach is also required, in order that a person be chosen by God for teaching. For in our day we rush forward everywhere, ready to teach the whole world, even if we ourselves do not understand what we teach, and if we do not understand it, still the grace and command of God who sends us is lacking. . . .

Many people do have the ability to teach, even if they do not have great learning. Others have both, and they are the best teachers. . . .

The man therefore who neglects this gift and involves himself in other matters sins against this command of the apostle, indeed, of God, especially those men who have been called and placed into teaching positions, even though they are not yet called by name.⁵¹

The church should look for men with gifts of grace for the preaching and teaching ministry. Those who have gifts to serve as pastors should be trained and called to such a service. Arnold Bittlinger correctly says:

Ein kirchlicher Amtsträger ist ein Charismatiker, der sich durch die Wirkung des Heiliges Geistes seiner Berufung zu einem (seinem Charisma entsprechenden) kirchlichen Dienst bewusst wurde und dessen Berufung von der Kirche anerkannt und bestätigt wurde (vgl. Gal. 1.15ff; Apostelgeschichte 13.1ff; Gal.2.7ff). Alle kirchlichen Aemter sind Funktionen Christi als des Hauptes seiner Gemeinde.⁵²

Christ has given gifts to men for this ministry (Eph. 4:11). Therefore the gift is the most important thing. Then comes training for the ministry.

The call into the ministry

The inner call or guidance of the Holy Spirit to the ministry--

In addition to having the gifts of grace, it is also necessary to have a call in order to serve in the pastoral ministry or in any of the other

⁵¹Martin Luther, Luther's Works, vol. 25, Lectures on Romans, ed. Hilton C. Oswald (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), pp. 446-47. Hereafter this reference will be cited as LW, 25.

⁵²Bittlinger, p. 21.

capacities. Is this call only a call from the church, or does it also include an inner call? There are different opinions about this. Calvin, and with him the Reformed tradition, talk about an outer and an inner call. Calvin says in the "Institutes":

I am speaking of the outward and solemn call which has to do with the public order of the church. I pass over that secret call, of which each minister is conscious before God, and which does not have the church as witness.⁵³

Concerning Luther's position Wilhelm Brunotte says: "Die vocatio interna hält Luther nach seinem gesamten theologischen Denken als Basis der Amtsvollmacht für ungeeignet . . ."⁵⁴ It is right that Luther put the emphasis on the call from the fellow believers. Yet there are expressions in Luther's writings which suggest that he was also conscious of a guidance by the Holy Spirit to serve with the Word of God, which would be equivalent to an inner call. Stephan and Philip were ordained to serve at the table (Acts 6:5-6). The one, Stephan, started in the power of the Holy Spirit to argue with the Jews and seeks to convince them of the Christian gospel (Acts 6:8-10), the other, Philip started to preach as an evangelist in Samaria, Caesarea and so forth (Acts 8:5-8,40).

Luther commented:

By what right and authority, I ask? Certainly they were not asked or called by anyone, but they did it on their own initiative and by reason of common law, since the door was opened to them, and they saw the need of the people who were ignorant and deprived of the Word.⁵⁵

⁵³John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill, The Library of Christian Classics, 21 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975):1062-63.

⁵⁴Wilhelm Brunotte, Das geistliche Amt bei Luther, (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1959), p. 176.

⁵⁵LW, 40:38.

The need of the church itself was a call, and they felt led by the Spirit to accept this call. In several places Luther emphasized that where there is no true gospel ministry any Christian who is capable should see it as his call to preach. Luther emphasized that ordinarily not anyone who felt himself called to it should enter the pastoral ministry, but only one who was called by the fellow-Christians. It is natural to infer that they feel an inner call to it, but what Luther emphasized was that this should not be put into practice without the call of the congregation.

In the later Lutheran tradition, especially in the pietistic renewal, the inner call was emphasized as a presupposition for the outer call by the congregation.

In the Scriptures we find that the prophets of the Old Testament were called directly by God to their ministry. So was also the apostle Paul (Gal. 1:15-16). It might be argued that they were called to special ministries. But when Paul wrote to his co-worker Timothy, he wrote about God ". . . who saved us and called us with a holy calling (καλέσαντος κλήσε: ἀγία)". Seen in the context, especially in relation to verse 8, it seems that Paul was mainly thinking of the call to the ministry of the gospel. In this call from God he included Timothy. When in 1 Tim. 3:1 he mentioned persons who ". . . aspire to the office of bishop . . .," he was not talking about a selfish desire but the person feeling himself called or led by the Spirit to desire this office. Paul did not reject this personal desire or inner call, but he wanted it tested by the church to see whether the man had the necessary spiritual and natural qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-7). So it is Biblically valid to talk about an inner call both to the pastoral ministries and to other

ministries. It may come in different ways and with different strength and clarity, but on the basis of the Bible I find it is right to talk about an inner call.

The Call of the Church -- About the election of elders (bishops-pastors), the apostle Paul wrote to his co-worker that such persons should be tested as to their gifts (aptitude to teach) and about other spiritual and human qualifications, and then called into that ministry (1 Tim. 3: 1-7). All the Christians had the same right. But for the proclamation of the gospel and the leadership of the church they should elect among themselves men who had the gifts of grace, given to the church by Christ (Eph. 4:11), and had the other necessary qualifications for this ministry so that the church might fulfill her mission. This principle Luther renewed at the time of the Reformation. He says about this:

Thus who are now called priests would all be laymen like the others, and only a few officiants would be elected by the congregation to do the preaching. Thus it is only an external difference because of the office to which one is called by the congregation. Before God, however, there is no distinction, and only a few are selected from the whole group to administer the office in the stead of the congregation. They all have this office, but nobody has any more authority than the other person has. Therefore nobody should come forward of his own accord and preach in the congregation. No, one person must be chosen from the whole group and appointed. If desired, he may be disposed.⁵⁶

Luther emphasized that, even if all true believers had the same right to the preaching ministry, for the sake of order, one or as many as necessary, should be elected and called into the official preaching ministry. "Otherwise," Luther said, "there might be a shameful confusion among the people of God, and a kind of Babylon in the church where everything

⁵⁶LW, 30:55.

should be done in order . . . (1 Cor. 14:40)."⁵⁷ By doing so the congregation is performing the will of God who has ordained that there shall be a preaching ministry in the church. Luther said about this:

. . . Let those who come together cast their ballots and elect one or as many as are needed of those who are capable. By prayer and the laying on of hands let them commend and certify these to the whole assembly, and recognize and honor them as lawful bishops and ministers of the Word, believing beyond a shadow of doubt that this has been done and accomplished by God.⁵⁸

The statements of Luther that all Christians have the same right to the preaching office, and at the same time that it is instituted by God, should be understood in this light. Werner Elert seems to be right when he says:

In such a call--one that takes the place through men--we may and should see a divine call if those who extend the call are authorized by God to do so But God has also conferred on the church of Christ such authorization to extend a call.⁵⁹

A Biblical reference for such a procedure we find in Acts 13:1-4. After having selected Paul and Barnabas as missionaries, verse 4 says: "So being sent by the Holy Spirit . . ."

What is here said about the pastor (including elders and bishops) is also applicable to the other ministries mentioned in Chapter II.⁶⁰

There is a practical question about the call to the ministry, whether it should be done only by the local congregation or by the

⁵⁷ LW, 40:34.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

⁵⁹ Werner Elert, The Structure of Lutheranism (St. Louis and London: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 1:348.

⁶⁰ Supra, pp. 68-69.

church in a wider sense, such as the presbytery or synod. When a local church is part of a synod, there should at least be cooperation between the two. For the purpose of examining the candidates for the ministry, and considering the need of the whole church (synod), there are many advantages to having the synod call after having consulted the local congregation. When this is the common agreement among the churches, it would not be a violation for the Christians, through the organs they have chosen, to call to the ministry. This is especially so when we think of the ministries which serve the whole church (synod).

The ordination to the ministry

According to Lutheran teaching, ordination does not add anything to the call. Why this is so Luther explained well in his book,

The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, when he said:

Let everyone, therefore, who knows himself to be a Christian, be assured of this, that we are all equally priests, that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and the sacraments. However, no one may make use of this power except by consent of the community or by the call of a superior. (For what is common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he is called.) And therefore this "sacrament" of ordination, if it is anything at all, is nothing else than a certain rite whereby one is called to the ministry of the church. Furthermore, the priesthood is properly nothing but the ministry of the Word--the Word I say; not the law, but the gospel.⁶¹

For the Roman Catholic church ordination was, and is, a sacrament which empowers the priest to offer sacrifice (the Eucharist), and gives him a character indelebilis. Luther broke with this unbiblical teaching and gave a new meaning both to the ministry and to

⁶¹Luther, Three Treatises, p. 248-49.

ordination. Cyril Eastwood explains Luther's view correctly when he says:

Anyone who has received the true calling hold the ministry independently of ordination. It follows that ordination is only a public confirmation of calling, and what is received in calling is not some special gift of grace or power but a commission.⁶²

Seen in connection with Article X of the Smalcald Articles, the Augsburg Confession, Article XIV, must also naturally be understood in this sense. Leif Grane says that "the 'ordentlich Beruf' depends on the priesthood of all believers and not on the cooperation of the bishops."⁶³ On this basis Luther could say that the congregations could ordain their pastors independently of the bishop. Luther also said that a man was a minister as long as he had a call. When he leaves the call, he is a layman again. In The Babylonian Captivity of the Church he said:

According to what the Scriptures teach us, what we call the priesthood is the ministry. So I cannot understand at all why one who has once been made a priest cannot again become a layman; for the sole difference between him and a layman is his ministry.⁶⁴

Luther's understanding of the ministry and ordination is in harmony with the Scriptures. Both in the church in Antioch (Acts 13: 1-3) and concerning Timothy (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6), the church recognized the gifts, called them to special ministries, ordained them by laying hands on them and praying for God's blessing on their ministry.

⁶²Eastwood, p. 40.

⁶³Leif Grane, Confession Augustana (Gyldendal: 1963), p. 129: "Paa grund af det almindelige praestedomme afhenger 'ordentlich Beruf' ikke av biskoppenes medvirken."

⁶⁴Luther, Three Treatises, p. 249.

By this they publicly confirmed their call and entrusted them with the responsibility for their ministry. So Luther here put biblical principles, which had been concealed, into practice again.

The Authority of the Ministry

What authority does the ministry possess? From the Holy Scriptures we can say that the authority is the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that "the words I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63). The letter to the Hebrews says: "For the word of God is living and active" (Heb. 4:12). Jesus promised that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came over them and be his witnesses to the end of the world (Acts 1:8). As servants who are called to be "ministri verbi divini" who are using "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17), they have authority. But if they fail to preach the true gospel, they are no longer true servants of the Word of God. They have no authority and should be deposed, as Luther said. With reference to the authority of the keys, Luther said: "Whether they want it or not (they must concede) that the keys are an exercise of the ministry of the Word and belongs to all Christians."⁶⁵ Only the Holy Spirit makes men true expositors of the Word. In his book To the Nobility of the German Nation Luther said: "Pope, emperor, and universities may make Doctors of Arts, of Medicine, of Laws, of the Sentences, but be assured that no man can make a Doctor of Holy Scripture except the Holy Spirit from heaven."⁶⁶ Because he is called by the fellow believers to

⁶⁵LW, 40:28.

⁶⁶Luther, Three Treatises, p. 98.

preach the Word of God and to administer the sacraments, he has the authority of the Word of God when he preaches it in the power of the Holy Spirit. Then he has the authority to call the Christians to obedience to the Word of God. "But," as Michael Green says, "the minister's authority does not demand obedience because of his position, but because of his service."⁶⁷ That service must be according to the Word of God.

The congregation's attitude to those servants of the Word who truly preach and teach, give leadership and execute spiritual care, should be that of respect and honor (1 Tim. 5:17). The men should be obeyed as far as they are true expositors of the Word of God (Heb. 13:7,17). The congregation should also care for the material need of such servants (1 Tim. 5:18; Gal. 6:6).

The Pastoral Ministry in Relationship to the Priesthood of All Believers and the Gifts of Grace

The ministry not a special estate but a special function

Also at Vatican II the un-Biblical doctrine that the priesthood was a special estate was re-affirmed in the Catholic Church. It decreed:

The official priesthood is distinct from the common priesthood of the faithful "in essence and not only in degree." Hence the power are conferred by a special sacrament and its ministers are distinguished by a special "character."⁶⁸

It was this doctrine which Luther so strongly rejected. After having stated that all true Christians have the same dignity and the same authority he said: "In this view of the ministry, the so-called 'indelible character' vanishes and the perpetuity of the office is shown to be

⁶⁷Green, p. 27.

⁶⁸Niermann, p. 101.

fictitious."⁶⁹ Luther time and again repeated that there are not two estates. He said about this:

Paul's frequent use of the word "stewardship" or "household," "ministry," "minister," "servant," "one serving the gospel," etc., emphasizes that it is not the estate, or order, or any authority or dignity that he wants to uphold, but only the office and the function.⁷⁰

Luther's Biblical reinterpretation of the ministry is related both to the doctrine of justification by faith alone and to his rediscovery of the priesthood of all believers and the doctrine of the church.

Lewis William Spitz says:

The doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers is a corollary of the doctrine of justification by faith. That accounts for its important position in Luther's theology and in the doctrine of the church which bears his name.⁷¹

Those people who were justified "propter Christum per fide" constituted one people of God. This people is the church, which the Augsburg Confession, Article VII, explains as: "This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel."⁷²

In this assembly of believers there are no different classes of people, not one class of a holy order, and one of ordinary people.

William Robinson is right when he says:

⁶⁹LW, 40:35.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Lewis William Spitz, "The Universal Priesthood of Believers with Luther's Comments," Concordia Theological Monthly, 23 (January 1952):15.

⁷²The Book of Concord, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 32.

He [Luther] removed meritorious works from the Christian vocation and placed them as the fruit of ordinary Christian living, but not of merit, but of faith. . . .

Any "secular vocation" was to be on the same level as a "religious vocation": it was to be "religious vocation" and was so sealed by the baptismal vows which were common to both clergy and laity.⁷³

On the basis of Scripture and Luther's teaching we can say that the universal priesthood and the ministry are of the same nature, but that ministry has a special function in the assembly of believers as was pointed out above, and should be performed by those called to do it.

The function of the ministry and the work of the priesthood of all believers

The pastoral ministry, or any of the other permanent ministries, is not supposed to take over the work which really belongs to the priesthood of all believers. Its task is to equip the priesthood to function (Eph. 4:12; compare Chapter III⁷⁴). Often the thinking is apt to be the opposite. The pastor, the teacher, the evangelist and other servants of the church are employed to do the work of the church. The believers', the so-called laity's role is to supply the funds, listen to the preaching and help the pastor and eventually the other workers in their ministry as much as they can. After having pointed out this situation, Arnold Bittlinger rightly says:

Im Neuen Testament sind die Verhältnisse genau umkehrt. Die verschiedene Gemeindedienste sind nicht einem bestimmten Amsträger, sondern der Gemeinde übertragen. Sie hat die Verantwortung für die rechte Ausübung des Dienstes. Der

⁷³William Robinson, Completing the Reformation, The Doctrine of the Priesthood of all Believers (Lexington, Kentucky: College of the Bible, 1955), pp. 11-12.

⁷⁴Supra, pp. 101-102.

Amtsträger ist Helfer der Gemeinde - und nicht umgekehrt.
 Er hilft der Gemeinde, dass sie ihren Dienst besser
 ausrichten kann.⁷⁵

This does not mean that the pastoral ministry and the other ministries are not necessary. They are very important and necessary for the life of the church. They are "to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). So the task of the ministry may be even more demanding. Often it is easier to do things oneself than to teach others how to do them. The purpose of all education is to educate the students to do things themselves. The primary purpose of the Christian ministry, said Paul, is to equip, to nurture, the believers so that they can be active in the ministry of upbuilding of the church. This does not mean that preaching, and listening to preaching and teaching of the Word of God is of little importance. On the contrary, it is chiefly through the Word of God that the saints are equipped for the ministry. But it is also important with a practical application. As Jesus and Paul took disciples with them out in the field of work, so practical experience is also necessary. So those instructed will then again be able to teach others. In this way the church's ministry will be far more effective and far-reaching in the upbuilding of the church and in witnessing to the world. And as Ray C. Stedman says: "Remember that the ministry of the body (the believers) is the ministry of Jesus Christ, at work in human society."⁷⁶

To separate the clergy and the laity and to make the work of the priesthood of all believers just a private affair between the believer

⁷⁵Bittlinger, pp. 28-29.

⁷⁶Ray C. Stedman, Body Life (Glendale, California: A Division of G/L Publications, 1974), p. 58.

and God is to make the congregation passive. An example of this we find in the following statement of H. E. Jacobs:

The spiritual priesthood and the ministry are entirely distinct institutions. The former has reference to the personal relationship of the individual towards God, and his direct and immediate access, through Christ, to the throne of grace. The latter has reference to the public performance of duties that are to be discharged, according to direct instructions in God's name. The spiritual priesthood is the prerogative of the individual; the ministry is found only where there is a congregation. . . .⁷⁷

It is true, as we have seen, that the pastoral ministry has a special function in the congregation, but as Michael Green says:

". . . nowhere do we meet the suggestion that the clergy and the laity (the very terms are not only anachronisms, but distortions of the New Testament position) have realms into which the other is not permitted to venture."⁷⁸ As Luther so often emphasized, the pastor is called to a ministry of preaching and teaching in the church. But this ministry is first of all "to equip the saints for the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:12). As we have seen in the first part of this paper, the work of the priesthood of all believers is not only an individual one with direct access to God in Christ. It is more than that. They have an important part in the upbuilding of the church as the apostle Paul said they should ". . . teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16). Toward the world all the Christians, as Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, ". . . are ambassadors for Christ,

⁷⁷Henry Eyster Jacobs, A Summary of the Christian Faith (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1905), p. 424.

⁷⁸Green, p. 27.

God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). In order that the Christians may be equipped to do this, the special preaching and teaching ministry and the sacraments are necessary. Normann Brauer says:

. . . The common idea and practice that the pastor is to do the work of the congregation, and if fortunate, to get a few laymen to help him is actually a wrong conception of the Royal Priesthood of Believers.⁷⁹

The leaders will not accomplish much if they go out to fight by themselves, even if they fight courageously. But if they can train an effective army of soldiers they will accomplish much more. Such well trained and well equipped soldiers will be able to stand against the power of darkness, and to wield the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:10-18).

The ministry and the gifts of grace

As we have stated before, every believer has received at least one gift of grace which the Holy Spirit has bestowed upon him. After having stated that, the apostle Peter exhorted them: ". . . employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace . . ." (1 Peter 4:10-11). As we found in Chapter II, some of these gifts should be permanent offices or functions in the church. Some of them had a wider area than the local congregation. But the local congregations should share in supporting these gifts and their function. How many of the offices and functions mentioned in Chapter III,⁸⁰ should have a ministry

⁷⁹Normann Brauer, "An Examination of the Passages in the New Testament which speak of the Royal Priesthood of Believers" (B.D. Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1950), p. 69.

⁸⁰Supra, pp. 92-98.

in the local congregation may vary depending on the congregation and the community. At least these ministries should be functioning in the church in a wider sense.

In addition to the gifts of grace which have permanent offices or functions, there are, as we stated in Chapter II, many gifts which are not connected with fixed offices and functions. Ray C. Stedman puts it this way:

As a physical human body consists of numerous cells exercising various functions, so the body of Christ consists of many members, each of whom possesses a specific function that is absolutely essential to the proper operation of the body.

It is obvious that there can be no hope of ever getting the church to operate as it was intended to do until each individual member recognizes and begins to exercise the spiritual gifts which he has received.⁸¹

Looking at the early church, especially as we see it in the letter to the Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, 1 Peter, the pastoral epistles, and Acts, both the gifts which had a permanent office and the other gifts were functioning. The result was a tremendous growth of the church and in a short time the gospel spread in a wide area. William Robinson says: "They did not simply join the throng of 'sermon listeners,' as so many do today. They voiced their own testimony to the amazing Gospel which set them free."⁸² A physical body may exist without several limbs and other members of the body, but it will not be able to perform the work it is supposed to do. So it is with the body of Christ, the church.

⁸¹Stedman, p. 50.

⁸²Robinson, p. 19.

CONCLUSION

It is natural to conclude this study with the thoughts with which it was begun. The church is the body of Christ. Christ is the head, and the body consists of those who are redeemed by Him. To this body, the fellowship of believers, Christ has entrusted the message of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-19). He has called His church to be "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1), which is the gospel (Eph. 3:1-8).

For performing this stewardship Christ has given spiritual gifts, gifts of grace, to the church. They are many, and they are different. Some are more conspicuous and some almost unnoticeable. But they are all important. Some of these gifts Christ has given and appointed to have a permanent function or office (Eph. 4:11), others not. But there is no contradiction between these two categories of gifts. That we see clearly from 1 Cor. 12:28 where those connected with a permanent office and the others are mentioned in conjunction. Men are called into the permanent offices and functions to equip the rest of the ". . . saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12).

In this study I have endeavoured to show that the priesthood of all believers, the gifts of grace and the ministry (ministries) are not three separated areas, but that they are interrelated, and that they make an organic whole so that the church, the body of Christ may function properly and fulfill the mission given to her.

In the world of sin, where the church is the fellowship of believers who are saved by the grace of God, but yet simul justus et

peccator, both sin and imperfection will cling to the function of the church. Only the church triumphant which have reached the goal and is in glory, will be perfect and cleansed from all spots and wrinkles. Yet it should be our aim to apply Biblical principles to the life and to the function of the church. This goal may be expressed thus: The church is the body of Christ where all the members function according to the gifts of the Spirit, the gifts of grace given to each member, and that these gifts, both those with a permanent office and those not, function in harmony, in the freedom of the Spirit, in decent order, on the basis of the Word of God, to the upbuilding of the saints and for the proclamation of the gospel to the world.

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